



The Ivy League Connection

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ILC INTERVIEW

Greetings to all of the applicants for The Ivy League Connection (ILC).

Part of the application process includes a brief interview (perhaps 15 minutes) in front of selected panelists. You'll be asked ten questions that are designed to test your ability to think on your feet and provide a chance to review your critical thinking.

During this interview you will be sitting at one end of a small table with several interview panelists on both sides. In the back of the room Don will be flitting around snapping photos of you and there will be a handycam sitting at the end of the table filming you. Just pretend like he's not there. At 6'-1" and 275 pounds carrying a big camera he should blend right in. Mr. Ramsey and Ms. Kronenberg may also be in the back of the room with us. Pay no attention to us. Stay focused on your interview and impressing the panelists.

Keep in mind that no one in the room is your enemy and we want all of you to do well. Please take no offense to any references to your youth but our experience is that many people your age—no matter how sharp or experienced they might be—oftentimes have trouble with speaking in public and being interviewed. To help you with your interview we've prepared a few tips that might make your interview more successful. We've sat through a lot of ILC interviews and watched a lot of tapes so we get to see some of the things that applicants do right and things they do that hurt themselves. Whether you take heed of these suggestions or not—the choice is yours.

What we can suggest is that when you enter the room, enter with confidence. Greet each of the panelists individually and extend your hand to shake theirs while introducing yourself. When you shake their hand, the last thing you want is for it to be a weak 'dead fish' type of handshake. You don't have to be real physical and make out like you're a lumberjack but make the handshake firm and confident. This even applies to the ladies.

When opportunity knocks, some people answer the door while others just complain about the noise.

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When you dress, dress as though you were going to church or to meet someone very important. ‘Business casual’ is the phrase often used to describe the requisite attire for these interviews. For the women: a dress is nice but a pantsuit works, too. For the gents: a suit works but isn’t necessary. A sport coat and slacks work—tie optional. We can speak from experience on this, sometimes our parents might buy us that one suit we need to be dressed appropriately but they often forget that as teenagers you’re constantly growing. If you only have one suit or sport coat but it was purchased when you were much younger—and smaller—perhaps you shouldn’t wear it for this interview. You need to wear something that fits and you’re comfortable in. On the other hand, jeans, a T-shirt and tennis shoes are a death sentence.

Facial jewelry, visible tattoos and fluorescent streaks through your hair may not be as acceptable to the panelists as they are to your friends so be aware of how others might react to them when meeting you for the first time.

This shouldn’t have to be brought up but we had an applicant a few seasons ago that now prompts us to bring it up: bathe and run a comb/brush through your hair. The last thing you want is for the panelists to be distancing themselves from you (or your smell) and to be staring at what they think are things crawling through your hair. Wear clothes that are clean and have been appropriately pressed. And let that be the last we’ll discuss of that subject.

For all of you, while it might be cold outside, inside it’s reasonably warm. The point here is that wearing your heavy jacket and scarf during the interview might not be the look you want. Enough said.

When you sit, pull your chair up to the table and sit with an upright posture. Don’t slouch or hunch your back.

As you respond to the questions, keep in mind that **there’s absolutely nothing on the tabletop or the ceiling that should be of any interest to you so don’t fix your eyes there**. Look directly at each of the panelists as you respond. Move your gaze from panelist to panelist so each of them thinks that you’re responding directly to them.

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Smile—a lot.

Watch for those idiosyncrasies that many of us have but often fail to notice in ourselves. In particular, the ‘you knows’, the ‘likes’ and the ‘ums’ need to be left out of your interview. Keep your hair away from your eyes and watch that you don’t cover your mouth with your hands.

As for the hands, try to refrain from just keeping them in your lap or on the tabletop. Gesticulate and be animated but without looking like a wild man/woman.

As for your responses, speak clearly and loudly enough so that the panelists can clearly hear you (no shouting, though).

There are no ‘yes’ and ‘no’ type of questions—the panelists want to hear your thoughts. We don’t need a Fidel Castro seven-hour type of speech so briefly articulate your responses so the panelists—who don’t know anything about you—can feel confident that you’re the one that deserves this scholarship.

If you don’t understand the question—ask. There’s no shame in not understanding what’s being asked of you. Also, the last thing you want to do is to fake it. If you don’t have a response, you’re far better off just saying so rather than rambling on about something you know nothing about. Don’t ever assume that just because you’re a bright person that the panelists are dumber than a box of rocks—they’re not. Not only are they sharp people but they’ve also been around and can spot a scam artist a mile away.

Make sure that you understand what this program and class are all about so you can explain not only why you’re the best applicant but why this will be a life changing event for you. **Look it up and study it.** Know the professor and what it is that you’ll be learning there and be prepared to defend why this class will be of benefit to you. Keep in mind that this isn’t college camp where you’re just going off for a summer adventure on someone else’s dime. As a matter of fact, if you wanted to remind the panelists that you understand and appreciate that it’s private citizens that are paying the \$9-10,000 for you to participate in this 2-3 week program, this would probably impress them.

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While in class you're expected to show your leadership skills, to throw your hand in the air every time a question is asked begging to be called upon and you get to make presentations in front of some very intimidating people. The panelists will be looking for those kinds of students rather than the ones who will be sitting in the back row simply occupying a seat.

The panelists want to know if you're on top of some of the hot button topics of the day like school security, financing of the schools, the Exit Exam and other things that each student should be aware of. If asked about something, they want to know your thoughts and why you think that way. You might prepare yourself should any of these subjects be brought up.

They may ask you if you have anything that you want to say about why you should be picked or if you have any questions of them. Don't be shy or modest. This is the time to toot your own horn. Tell them about your previous experiences and the effect it's had on you. Tell them how important it is for you to be an ambassador for the program by telling your classmates and members of the community about the parts of the world they've never seen and the opportunities that await them.

When the interview is over, thank each of the panelists and, while smiling at them and looking them in their eyes, shake their hands.

One of the most important things is not to be nervous. Yes, this is important—you want to show the panelists just how confident that you are. This is not high school and your level of confidence in yourself can mean the difference between coming back a hero or coming back in a straightjacket. We had a young lady a few seasons ago who nearly broke into tears during the first question of the interview. Of course we all felt sorry for her but the panelists had to wonder whether she had the maturity to be a part of the ILC at this time. We know what you're all capable of—we just hope that you know it, too.

We hope some of this may be of some help to you. Should you have questions, please feel free to call Don on his landline or to send him an email. We're here to help.