



**HOW-TO GUIDE**

# ACING YOUR PRIVATE SCHOOL ADMISSION INTERVIEW

SEVEN *essential* TIPS

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# Welcome.

For both the child and the family, the private school admission process is a journey. With the interview acting as the first bridge between your family and their potential school, it can seem like a daunting task for a child of any age.

You'll come to find that this part of the process is an exciting step, giving you and your child the opportunity to learn more about the school and together determine the best fit for their educational needs.







# 1

## KNOW THE *basics*.

Understanding the purpose behind an admission interview can ease the pressure for your child. The interview portion is beneficial for both the family and the school, as it provides an opportunity to get to know each other in order to determine the best place for the child's education. A one-on-one conversation between your child and a school staff member gives each party a better sense of who they are than if they merely read the information provided throughout the process.



## 2

### DETERMINE WHAT RANKS *supreme*.

Before the interview, sit down as a family and talk to your child about what is important to them in a school. Between academics, extracurriculars, interests, class size, teaching style, and even the social atmosphere of a school, there is a lot to consider. But finding what will fit both you and your child's needs best is crucial.





# 3

## COME *prepared*, NOT REHEARSED.

The admission process at any private school is in place to determine the best fit for your child, both academically and emotionally. Giving authentic and genuine responses allows your child's personality to shine through, so the school can evaluate what place is best for your child's overall happiness during the course of their education.



# 4

## *Curiosity* IS ENCOURAGED.

Just as the school is eager to learn more about your child, we hope you and your child are eager to learn more about the school as well. From what kind of schedule the school uses to potential additional academic support, ask anything and everything you want to know. This could be the start of a long-term relationship between your family and the school, so start building the foundation of trust and comradery now. However, do your homework before and learn about the school from the school website and literature, speak to their current families and gather information if possible. This research can help you ask meaningful questions and help you work through school comparisons.





# 5

## ENVISION YOUR CHILD IN *the environment.*

Take what you have learned about the school, and try to imagine your child there. Does the school seem to be a “fit” between your child’s strengths (and weaknesses) and provide room for your child to grow and develop? Is there a heavy emphasis on strong academic achievement? If your child struggles in that area, then that particular school might not be the best fit. You know your child best. Exploring all the offerings of a school, like the presence of fine arts or athletics or the weight of importance that daily chapel or community service holds, and picture your child in that atmosphere. You want them to flourish and grow into the best version of themselves, so choose a school that will allow them the freedom, support and academic programming to do so. Attend school events that are not designed specifically for prospective families, if allowed, to gain additional insight on school community (perhaps a sporting event, public speaker or theater production). Observe the culture and way the families interact at these types of events.



# 6

## GET YOUR CHILD IN ON THE *action.*

What you view as the perfect school for your child, and what your child believes could be very different things. Though parents will often have the final say, it's important to talk through the many aspects of what you find important and why and listen to your child. Many schools also offer a "shadow day" in conjunction with the interview process, where your child is able to experience the school firsthand through the perspective of a student.





## THE INTERVIEW *isn't* EVERYTHING.

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Everyone can have a bad day. It's important for the family to know that even if your child feels they did not present their best self during the interview portion of the process, there are plenty of other aspects of a child that the school will take into consideration. Teacher evaluations, transcripts, writing sample, and social interactions all play a part in the comprehensive picture the school is crafting of your child.

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*Navigating the world of Independent Schools can be intimidating but it doesn't have to be. I hope that by sharing my experience with prospective parents, they will feel more at ease.*

*– Ruth Burke, Associate Head of School, The Episcopal School of Dallas.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RUTH BURKE is the Associate Head of School at The Episcopal School of Dallas, overseeing Enrollment, Communications, Community Culture, and Strategic Initiatives.

Ruth's experience in independent school administration spans 28 years with 21 in service to ESD, and The Bolles School and University Liggett School. Her roles include administrator, teacher, coach, advisor, and dean. She has served as conference chair for the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) Admission Conference and led numerous panel discussions and seminars for the Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB), National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and ISAS.

Ruth earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Masters in School Administration from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.





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