

# DEVELOPING YOUR PERSONAL STORY

Learn the steps to stand out in an interview!



A few years back I wrote a five-page article called, “Developing Your Personal Story.” That article is still the most useful tip for preparing people to interview, but only those who invest some time can benefit. This executive summary provides an overview which may be helpful for those who can’t dive in to the complete process.

Most interviewers are going to make up their mind in the first few minutes. That is, the first few minutes after the chit-chat and icebreakers, when they offer you a chance: “Tell me a little bit about yourself,” or “Why are you interested in us?” This is your chance to score. You will have missed the boat, if you do not have a well-thought-out story ready to tell that explains just what makes you tick and how this tick fits their clock. Your “Personal Story” should have three parts:

- A memorable and unique theme that explains the heart of you.
- Two or three achievements that have accomplished as a result of this theme
- A connection between your theme and the target college.

There is no more critical piece of the interview for you to prepare than this. If the reports are correct, this is all your interviewer will hear before they actually make up their mind. Oh, don’t worry- even though they made up their mind, they will still continue the interview gathering more evidence for their decision. To fully capitalize on the opportunity of any open-ended question your “Personal Story” should be about 2 to 2.5 minutes long. You need to know the structure and pieces of this story, but you do not want to memorize it. Keep it fresh and conversational. Even if you do not get the perfect question, you can engage with the questions you do get and eventually steer the conversation to your theme and achievements.

Most people think they cannot really prepare for interviews because they do not know what questions will be asked. This is good news, because they will not be prepared. If you heed this advice, or better yet, read the full article and learn the steps to “Developing Your Personal Story”, you will stand out. Not only that, but just think how much more confident you will feel walking into an interview knowing you have a plan to communicate the most important information the interviewer seeks.

*The full article, referenced above, appears in four short blog installments on the Interview Skill Coaching Academy website. Scroll down through the blog entries until you find “Developing Your Personal Story - Part 1.” The other three parts each appear directly above Part 1. The website can be found at [www.iscacademy.org/blog](http://www.iscacademy.org/blog). Mark Efinger is the Founder and President of the Interview Skill Coaching Academy, where he has successfully coached students for interviews gaining access to many top universities, colleges and secondary schools.*