

HOW TO IMPRESS AN ASSESSOR DURING YOUR SCHOOL INTERVIEW



Table Of Contents

Introduction	4
Part 1. The Group Interview	5
The Requirements	5
Bad scenario	6
Good scenario:.....	7
Task 1: Creative Task.....	7
TECHNIQUE 1: PUNS	9
TECHNIQUE 2: ALLITERATION	10
TECHNIQUE 3: ASSONANCE	10
Task 2: Group Discussion or Debate.....	11
Task 3: Puzzle Solving	14
Task 4: Word Puzzles.....	16
Task 5: Strategy Games.....	17
Dealing With Difficult Teammates	17
Evaluating Your Performance	19
Further Activities	21

Part 2. One-On-One Interview24

Task 1: Research the school.....24

Task 2: Preparing for questions.....25

Sample Responses.....29

Questions for the interviewer.....34

Part 3. Sample Interview36

Example36

Part 4. Interview Tips.....38

Part 5. Advice For Parents39

Things To Avoid39

Things You Should Do40

Part 6. Some Final Tips41

APPENDIX: Answers To The 9 Letter Puzzle.....42

9 letter words.....42

8 letter words.....42

7 letter words.....42

6 letter words.....43

6 letter words that may be proper nouns:44

5 letter words.....44

4 letter words.....46

4 letter words that may be proper nouns48

Introduction

Every year, as more and more students apply to join selective schools, the process for gaining entry seems to get harder and harder. Schools are looking for students who are well rounded and who they believe will be the best representatives for their school.

If you have been invited for an interview, congratulations! You have done well.

The interview can have two different sessions:

- i) a group interview and
- ii) a one on one interview with the principal or a panel of selection officials.

The problem for many students is that they have never sat an interview before, so they often don't know what to expect.

Over the years, we have helped countless students pass the interview stage of the selection process and we will present common questions and activities that past students have faced. This books will give you the advice you need to stand out from the crowd during each of the sections mentioned above.

Best of luck with your interview!

Part 1. The Group Interview

The Requirements

It is likely that you will have to participate in a group interview. This is when you and several other prospective students are interviewed together. You will be given questions or challenges, and asked to work together as a team to solve them. Usually you will be split into groups of 6 to 8 students to see how you perform in a larger group, however, you may be further split into smaller groups of 3 or 4 to see how you perform in smaller groups. The important thing to remember when participating in these interviews is that you aren't just being tested on the quality of your answers. Instead, you are being tested on how well you can cooperate and work with others in a team. Keeping that in mind, the most important pieces of advice we can give for group interviews are:

- Participate but don't be overly aggressive;
- Ask other group members if anyone has any initial ideas;
- Try to encourage other members to contribute;
- Be positive and welcoming of your teammates' ideas;
- Give constructive criticism;
- Pool together ideas and try them out one at a time then adjust if necessary;
- Try to demonstrate a logical and systematic planning process; and
- Come up with a final plan as a team;

Your interviewer will be on the lookout for uncooperative behaviour. Some things to avoid include:

- Interrupting other students
- Remaining silent and not contributing
- Grabbing materials such as pages, pens and other objects that should be shared
- Dismissing other people's ideas without constructive feedback
- Being overly possessive or defensive of your own ideas

Below is an example of a bad group discussion and a good group discussion. When reading the first example, see if you can figure out what these students are doing wrong. These students have been given the following task: “Come up with a motto for a local gym.”

Bad scenario

Student 1: (Grabs the paper) We have to come up with a name for a gym. I think it should be “Friendship, Fun, Fitness”

Student 2: No, that’s stupid. It should be “The Toughest In Town”

Student 3: Hmm...

Student 1: I think my idea was better. It was much more -

Student 2: No. We’re going with my idea. “The Toughest In Town”

As you can see, Student 1 grabbed the question sheet without sharing it and immediately presented their own idea without brainstorming as a group. They were also defensive when their idea was dismissed by Student 2. Student 2 dismissed “Friendship, Fun, Fitness” as stupid without any constructive feedback. They also interrupted Student 1 and forced their own idea on the group. Student 3, on the other hand, remained silent and didn’t contribute at all. As we can imagine, none of these students are likely to perform well. Let’s look at a better scenario.

Good scenario:

Student 1: Ok, we have to come up with a gym name. What are some of the things we want to show about the gym that would make people want to come?
Student 2: That it's friendly and fun.
Student 1: That's great. Anything else?
Student 3: That it makes you healthy.
Student 2: How about "Friendship, Fun, Health"?
Student 1: That's a good idea. But what if we change "Health" to "Fitness" so we have three F's?
Student 3: That's a great idea - alliteration is effective in mottos.
Student 2: I agree.

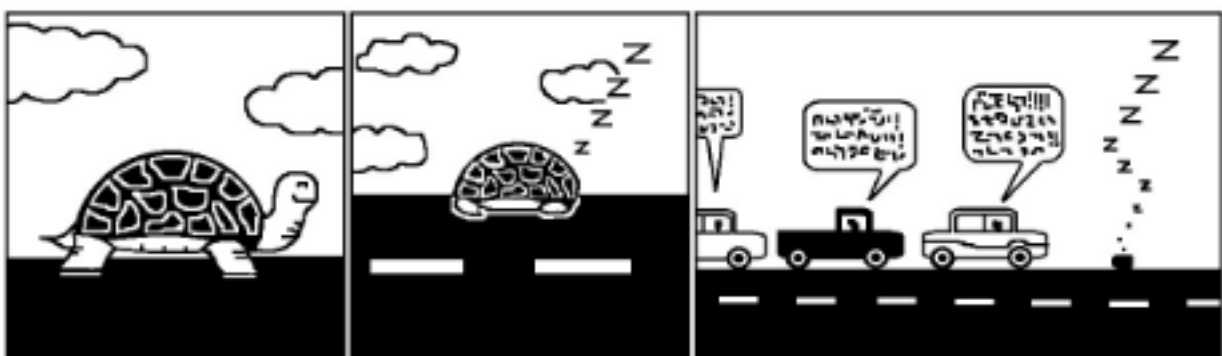
Remember, it doesn't matter what the final answer is; the important thing is that you worked together in a systematic, cooperative and effective way to get to it. Here are a few more examples of some of the tasks you might be presented with, and some tips on how to handle them.

Task 1: Creative Task

You might be given a prompt for a creative task. These tasks require you to work together and use your collective imaginations.

For example:

"Come up with a title for this comic and explain why you chose this title."



Here's some advice on how to deal with a creative task like this.

1. Start Slow: While a lot of students find it easy to think creatively in their own head, coming up with creative responses in a group setting is often more difficult. The best thing you can do is to take the pressure off. Don't expect everyone to come up with great ideas immediately. Instead of saying "does anyone have any ideas," you should ask more basic questions, such as "what are the main ideas in this comic" or "what is the most interesting thing about this comic?" Write down a list of key ideas.

Example:

Student 1: What are the main ideas in this comic?

Student 2: There's a turtle on the road.

Student 3: It's blocking traffic.

Student 2: Why don't we write a list of words that we might use in the title?

Student 1: Good idea! Turtle, road, cars, angry...

Student 3: Traffic, sleeping, driving...

2. Think Of Creative Techniques: Next, you should think of using creative techniques. If you are coming up with a title or a slogan, for example. Think about how you can use alliteration, assonance or puns to make your idea more exciting or interesting.

Technique 1: Puns

A pun is a joke that depends on a word having two meanings. The joke comes from the unexpected association with the second meaning after setting up the listener to expect the first meaning.

There are three different types of puns that are often used:

Substitution Pun

This is when they rely on substituting a similar sounding word with a different meaning.

Example: Puns are a low form of humour but I think poetry is verse. (verse is chosen because it sounds like worse)

Homonym Puns

These puns sound the same but have a different meaning and spelling (pale, pail, tail, tale)

Example: GET IN THE BOAT OAR ELSE! ('oar' is used in place of the word 'or')

Double Meaning Puns

These puns use words that have more than one meaning (fair – carnival ; fair – equal)

Example: What did the boss say when he sold the carnival? It was a fair deal.

The following 'book titles' make use of puns.

- *Have you read?*
- *Enjoy your homework by R.U. Joking*
- *Lions on the Loose by Luke Out*
- *Your turn to wash by Y. Mee*
- *Off to the Dentist by U.First.*
- *Broken Windows by E. Dunnett.*
- *Pickpocket Paul by M.T. Purse*

Technique 2: Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of each or most of the words in a sentence. The easiest way to use alliteration would be to repeat the starting letter of the words. The best example to illustrate would be tongue twisters.

Examples – Using alliteration with a letter

- Squawking seagulls swoop on sunbathers.
- The wild winds whisk to the west.
- Zany zebras zigzagged through the zoo.

Technique 3: Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words, phrases or syllables.

Example: Row, row, row your boat

Example:

Student 1: Turtle and traffic both start with T. We could use alliteration in our title.

Student 2: Traffic Turtle?

Student 3: How about Turtle Traffic Trouble?

Student 1: Yeah, that's good. That was we have three Ts.

Explain Your Process: When it comes time to explain why you chose your answer, assign one member as speaker for the group. The speaker should explain your thinking process step by step and justify the decisions that you made. They should also make sure to mention how each team member participated and show that they recognise everyone's contributions.

Example:

Student 1: First we talked about the main ideas that are in the comic. Student 2 suggested that we write down a list of key phrases that we could use. We came up with turtle, road, cars, angry, traffic, sleeping and driving. Then, we had to think about what would make a catchy title. I noticed that both turtle and traffic start with T, so I suggested we used alliteration to make our title more interesting. Student 2 suggested Traffic Turtle. Then student 3 suggested that we use Turtle Traffic Trouble so we have three Ts. We all agreed that it was a catchy title.

Task 2: Group Discussion or Debate

Your group might just be asked to discuss a topical or interesting issue and come up with arguments for or against a particular position.

Which is better? Single sex schools or co-ed schools?

1. Pick A Scribe

If you're asked to come up with ideas, it's important that you write all of your ideas down so that you don't forget them. In tasks like this, it's important to pick a scribe, whose job it will be to write down every idea. You should do this at the start of the activity. Tell your group "we should pick a scribe to write everything down," and ask "does anyone think they'd be good for this job?" If you are good at writing things down quickly and clearly, you might volunteer to be the scribe yourself.

2. Organise Brainstorming

When debating an issue that people have strong opinions on, it is easy for the brainstorming process to get a bit chaotic. People often want to express their opinion immediately and this can lead to a confusing and unstructured discussion. If you're asked to debate a particular topic, it's a good idea to have a sense of structure to your discussion. For example, you might write a contention in support of the topic and against

the topic then come up with reasons to support one argument first, and then come up with reasons to support the other side of the debate.

Single-sex schools are better	Co-ed schools are better
Girls learn differently to boys so this is better catered to at a single-sex school.	More representative of real life as you learn to interact with both males and females.

Example:

Student 1: Ok, so we have to debate whether single sex schools or co-ed schools are better.

Student 2: I think co-ed schools are better because it teaches boys and girls to get along.

Student 3: I think single sex schools are better because girls learn differently to boys.

Student 1: Ok, let's come up with some reasons why co-ed schools are better first. Then we can brainstorm ideas why single sex schools are better. Once we're done, we can weigh up each option and see which is the most convincing.

3. Think About Umbrella Topics

The following is a list of “umbrella topics” that you can use to ensure that each argument you put forth is different.

1. Financial
2. Environmental
3. Family/ social relationships
4. Health and safety
5. Individuality
6. Protection of society
7. Equality
8. Educational
9. Technological
10. Happiness

For example, 'Girls learn differently to boys' is an example of an educational argument, whereas 'More representative of real life' is an example of a social relationships argument.

4. Make The Most Of Different Perspectives

One of the best things about working in a group is that you have the opportunity to work with people who have different opinions to you. Each person in your group will have different experiences and attitudes and, as such, will have a unique perspective to offer when discussing issues. One of the best ways to show that you can make the most of group work during your interview is to ask others in your group to share their perspective, and show that you value different ideas.

Student 1: Well I think co-ed schools are a better idea, but I attend a co-ed school. Does anyone attend a single sex school?

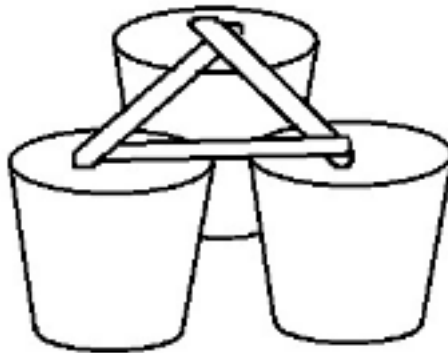
Student 2: I do.

Student 1: Great. What are your experiences? What difference do you think it makes just having girls at your school?

Task 3: Puzzle Solving

Another common activity type is a puzzle solving problem. Your interviewer might present your group with a difficult situation that you need to solve. Sometimes, these puzzles can even require physical activity. For example.

“There are 3 metal knives and 3 popsicle sticks stacked in a triangular formation. Try to balance a 4th cup which is filled with water on the formation using the equipment without knocking the structure over. You have 10 minutes”.



When faced with a puzzle like this, the first thing you should do is...

1. Stop!

Everyone’s first instinct is going to be to grab the cups and the knives and try to solve the problem themselves. But remember, you have a generous time limit for a reason. Before you touch anything, you should discuss a strategy with your team and brainstorm possible solutions. If one of your teammates tries to start solving the problem right away, you should say “Wait, (name), I think we should discuss this before we do anything.”

2. Discuss Possible Problems:

It is important to show that you have planned ahead and thought of all the possible problems before you do anything. Imagine scenarios of things that might go wrong and come up with plans to ensure that they don’t happen.

Example:

Student 1: What are some of the things that could go wrong?

Student 2: The cup might not balance right and it could fall.

Student 3: We'll have to make sure that we place it slowly and carefully and make sure it's balanced.

Student 1: Good, what else could go wrong.

Student 2: The sticks might not hold the weight of the cup.

Student 3: Maybe we could test it with something lighter first.

3. Choose The Right Person For The Job:

Whenever there's an activity that requires someone to do something or say something, it is important to remember that the loudest and most confident person is not always the right person for the job. Try not to assume that you have to do everything yourself. Instead, when it comes time to choose a person to place a cup on a pile, speak on behalf of the group, or be a scribe, you should try to figure out who is the right person for the job.

Student 1: OK, who should put the cup on top of the structure?

Student 2: I don't have very good hand-eye coordination, so I don't think it should be me.

Student 3: I think I could do it.

Student 1: Me too. Let's see who has the steadiest hands.

Student 2: I think it's you, Student 3.

Student 1: OK, Student 3, go for it.

Task 4: Word Puzzles

You may be asked to solve word puzzles such as the 9 letter word puzzle below as a way to test how you cope with high pressure situations.

Find as many words containing four or more letters including the middle letter in 2 minutes.

A	L	T
C	A	R
E	B	I

A good strategy would be to work through the letters systematically remembering to incorporate the middle letter. Think of anagrams for the existing words you have already come up with e.g. crate and react

Another strategy would be to write the letters in a circular formation or in a straight line. By displaying them differently, you will have a fresh perspective, increasing the likelihood of finding new words.

** Note: Answers to this puzzle found at the back of this book*

Task 5: Strategy Games

The use of strategy games is another task that may demonstrate to your interviewers how well you work together as a team.

Example:

Students are split into 2 groups of 3.

13 paper clips are placed in the middle of a table.

In turns, groups are permitted to take either 1,2 or 3 paper clips.

To win the game, you have to leave the opposition with one paperclip.

This task tests your ability to follow rules and cooperate with your teammates to achieve the most optimal outcome. It is important to think one or two steps ahead to try and predict what your opponent may do. For example, if there are 6 paperclips left and it's your turn, choosing 3 paperclips would leave 3 remaining. At this point, your opponent is given the opportunity to win by choosing 2 leaving you with one.

If on the other hand you have 6 left, by choosing 1, your opponent is left with no choice but to choose 1 clip (leaving 4, after which you can choose 3), 2 clips (leaving you with 3 after which you can choose 2) or 3 clips (leaving you with 2 after which you can choose 1 clip).

Play this game with a parent or sibling changing the number of paperclips to find different combinations.

Dealing With Difficult Teammates

Of course, even if you're a perfect member of your team, you could always be put in a group with difficult teammates. You might be in a group with people who don't contribute, or who talk over people. You might think that having difficult teammates will ruin your chances of succeeding in a group interview. But actually, they provide excellent opportunities to show off your teamwork skills. Here are some ways you can deal with difficult teammates that are sure to impress your interviewer.

Problem: One of your teammates isn't contributing or saying anything

Solution: If you can encourage an unresponsive teammate to participate, you are sure to impress your interviewer. Address them directly, with a friendly tone and try asking them simple questions that anyone can answer. For example instead of asking "What are some ways we could advertise a holiday to the beach?" say "(Name), what do you like about the beach?" When they respond, give them positive feedback so that they feel encouraged to participate in the future.

Problem: One of your teammates is interrupting other people

Solution: This is a very common problem that arises in group interview situations. Usually, there's at least one student who thinks that the best way to prove themselves is by talking as much as possible. If a student interrupts someone when they're talking, simply say "Hang on, (name), I don't think (name) was finished just yet. I was interested in what they were saying." This not only shows that you are a good listener, but also good at managing group situations.

Problem: One of your teammates is stubbornly pushing an idea that you know won't work

Solution: You should always avoid telling your teammates that their idea is bad. If you do this, they might feel less comfortable with contributing in the future. Instead, provide constructive criticism. Constructive criticism has three steps: a compliment, a criticism and a suggestion. For example: "I like your use of colours. However, I'm not sure if the font is playful enough. What if we keep your colour scheme, but try a different font style?" Remember, even if you end up using a component of the idea that you personally didn't like, the important thing is that you've demonstrated the ability to negotiate ideas with others.

Evaluating Your Performance

Below is an example of the kind of rubric that your interviewer might use to assess your performance in a group interview. There may be a rubric for each component in the group interview and these results are tallied at the end.

Try to keep this rubric in mind when you are thinking about how you would respond to particular group tasks.

	Very Good 4 points	Good 3 points	Average 2 points	Poor 1 point
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contributed enthusiastically in group discussions → Shared ideas willingly → Listened carefully to others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contributed in group discussions → Shared ideas when asked → Listened to others ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contributed minimally in group discussions → Shared minimal ideas when asked → Seemed inattentive when others were speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Did not contribute in group discussions → Did not share any ideas → Did not listen to others ideas
Leadership Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Encouraged others' skills and talents → Delegated tasks when necessary → Inspired a positive spirit among the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Recognised others' skills and talents → Made some attempt to delegate tasks → Had a positive impact upon the spirit of the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Barely considered others' skills and talents → Did as they were told → Did not discourage nor encourage the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Did not consider others' skills and talents → Tried to do everything themselves or did nothing → Discouraged the group

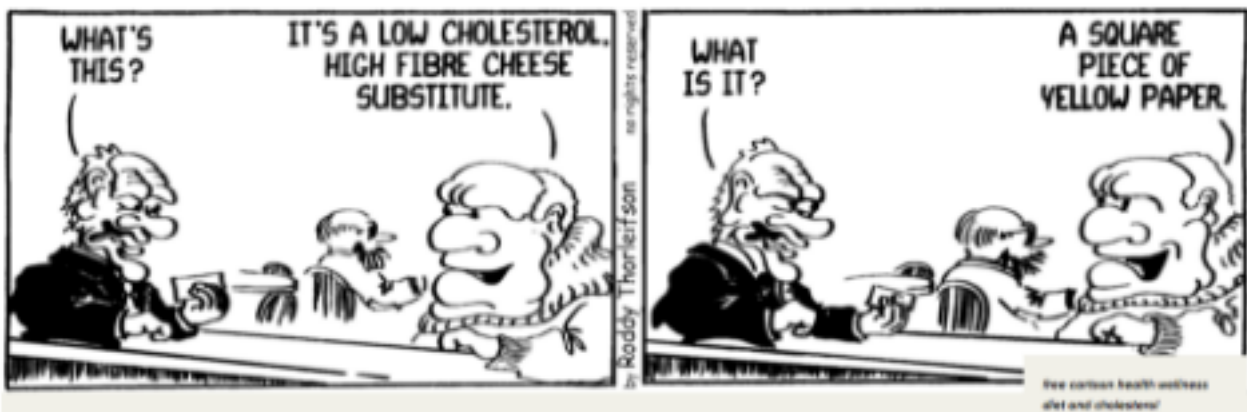
	Very Good 4 points	Good 3 points	Average 2 points	Poor 1 point
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Encouraged the group to let others speak when it was their turn → Directed relevant questions to the group → Gave adequate constructive criticism on others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Didn't interrupt others → Directed questions to the group → Gave some constructive criticism on others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Occasionally interrupted others → Asked for others' opinions → Gave minimal constructive criticism on others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Constantly interrupted others → Didn't seek opinions from others → Gave non-constructive criticism
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Encouraged others' ideas → Responded positively to constructive criticism → Was polite and friendly with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Accepted others' ideas → Accepted constructive criticism → Was polite to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Seemed disinterested in others' ideas → Became withdrawn in response to constructive criticism → Was neither friendly nor unfriendly to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Made fun of others' ideas → Got defensive or angry when given constructive criticism → Was rude to others

Further Activities

Below are a number of possible tasks that you and your group may be given in a group interview. For each task, try to think of ways that you could approach the task as a group. The most important thing is to think about how you might demonstrate, not just your ideas, but your skills at working effectively in a team.

Practice the following tasks with your family members or a group of friends.

Task 1: Think of a title for the following comic strip



Source: www.mooselakecartoons.com

Extension:

Find some comic strips online and try to come up with titles using the creative tools we discussed in the book. A useful site is www.webdonuts.com or mooselakecartoons.com

Task 2:

You work at an advertising agency and have been instructed to advertise the product below. Come up with a short idea for an ad for this product.



- What are some of your ideas?
- What's the first thing your group should do when given this task?
- What questions might you ask your group?
- How will you display your teamwork skills during this task?

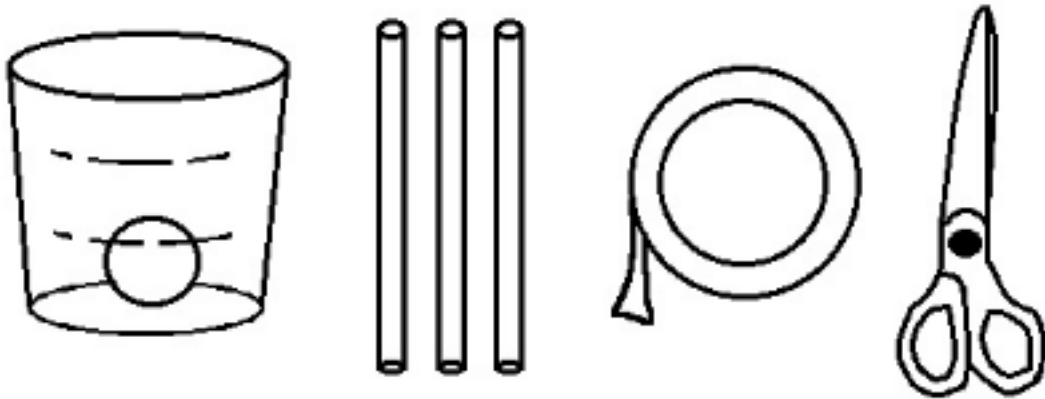
Task 3:

Decide as a group whether or not students should have to do homework.

- What are some of your ideas?
- What's the first thing your group should do when given this task?
- What questions might you ask your group?
- How will you display your teamwork skills during this task?

Task 4:

You are given a plastic cup with a ping-pong ball inside. You are also given three straws, a roll of sticky tape, some cardboard and some scissors. You have to remove the ping-pong ball from the cup without touching the cup or the ball with your hands. The cup cannot be moved.



- What are some of your ideas?
- What's the first thing your group should do when given this task?
- What questions might you ask your group?
- How will you display your teamwork skills during this task?

Part 2. One-On-One Interview

Along with a group interview, it is also likely that you will have to sit a one-on-one interview with the principal, a panel or another member of the school community. The point of this interview is to give the principal a chance to get to know you personally, find out about your talents and interests, and see how well you would fit into the school community. Keeping that in mind, the most important pieces of advice we can give for group interviews are:

- Show that you have a clear understanding of the school's values
- Demonstrate how you can be a valuable member of the school community
- Give detailed answers without rambling
- Come across as friendly, confident and sociable
- Show interest in the school and ask questions

Task 1: Research the school

Before your interview, you should find out as much information as possible about the school you are applying for. This will make you seem much more prepared in your interview, and will make it much easier to demonstrate why you will be a valuable member of the school. Some of the things you might research are...

- What are the school's central values? Do you share these values?
- What subjects does the school offer? Which of these interest you?
- Does the school offer any extension programs for advanced students?
- Does the school offer any extracurricular activities? Which of these interest you?
- What opportunities does the school offer students that other schools do not?

Activity:

Look up the website of your preferred school and write down as many things as you can find out about the school’s values, curriculum and extracurricular activities

Using this information, write a paragraph explaining why you think your chosen school would be a good school for you.

Task 2: Preparing for questions

Here are two example paragraphs, written using the structure from the previous page.

Firstly, I believe that I would be a valuable member of the _____ community due to my passion for sports. I have been playing competitive cricket for my school for five years and netball for seven years. The highlight of my sporting career was winning the inter-school netball grand final last year. I have heard that _____ have an excellent netball and cricket team. Given the opportunity, I would love to play for them both.

As well as my love for sport, I am also a passionate public speaker. I have been part of my school’s debating squad for three years. I also was elected House Captain this year due to my speech about how I overcame adversity when I was younger, which I had to give in front of the whole school. I would love to continue debating and public speaking throughout high school, and I feel that _____ would be an excellent place to do this.

Once you have a clearer idea of what kind of community the school has, and how it might be a good fit for you, it's time to start thinking about what questions you might be asked. Below is a list of some of the most common questions that come up in one-on-one interviews. When answering questions, it's important to give detailed responses. Try not to give one word answers such as "Yes" or "Maths". Instead, think about following this structure...

- **Topic Sentence:** A full sentence that sums up your answer to the question.
- **Examples:** An example that supports or proves what you have just said
- **Explanations of examples:** Provide an explanation of that example. If you claim to be good at a subject or an activity, give an example of your accomplishments.
- **Link:** A sentence that links what you have said back to the idea that you would be a valuable member of the school community.

Example:

Interviewer: What's your favourite subject at school and why?

Student: My favourite subject is Japanese. I've been learning Japanese since Year 7 and I've been finding the culture fascinating, particularly the fact that there are four different writing systems in Japan; Romaji, Katakana, Hiragana, and Kanji. In fact, I got 99% on my last Japanese exam, mostly because I spent a lot of time doing extra reading and trying to learn as much as I could. One of the reasons that I'd really like to attend this school is that you have an excellent Japanese program that I'm very interested in and there is an opportunity to go on exchange to Japan in Year 10.

Interviewer: What's your goal in life?

Student: My main goal in life is to find a career that challenges and motivates me. I really enjoy learning new skills and challenging myself by stepping out of my comfort zone; that's why I took up choir and debating last year. Hopefully, if I get into this school, I can expose myself to more challenges and figure out what areas engage me the most.

Activity:

Now try thinking of what you might say if you were given the questions below.

1) *What do you know about our school?*

2) *Why do you want to join the _____ program/ our school? Why do you think the program is suited to you?*

3) *What is your favourite subject at school and why?*

4) *Describe the last group project you did. What problems did you face? How could you have improved it?*

5) *What would your ideal class timetable be?*

6) *What is your favourite book and why?*

7) *What do you like to do in your free time?*

8) *What do you think would be the main problem that will affect people in the next 50 years?*

9) *Your friends are being bullied online. What would you do?*

10) *If you go back in time, what is the first place you would visit and why?*

11) *What would you like to do in your life?*

12) *Tell me about a time where you showed initiative.*

13) *Tell me about a time where you worked as a team to accomplish a goal.*

14) *How will this school help you achieve your goals in life?*

Sample Responses

Here are some examples of some good answers to the questions above. Note that these responses all use the TEEL structure. Keep in mind that these are just sample responses. You most likely have different interests and goals, so your own responses are likely to be different.

1) *What do you know about our school?*

I know that your school has a diverse curriculum with a wide range of subject options. I saw on your website that you offer classes in music, photography and Japanese. I'm really excited by the prospect of attending a school where I can do so many different interesting subjects. The main reason I'd love to attend this school is so I can be exposed to as many different new subjects as possible.

2) *Why do you want to join the _____ program/ our school? Why do you think the program is suited to you?*

I would love to join the music program because I think it would help me improve my piano skills. I think that having the chance to play in a band or an ensemble would help me improve much more than just practicing on my own. My old school didn't have many school bands, so I'm excited to have the chance to attend a school where students can practice and enjoy music together.

3) *What is your favourite subject at school and why?*

My favourite subject is Japanese. I've been learning Japanese since Year 7 and I've been finding the culture fascinating, particularly the fact that there are four different writing systems in Japan; Romaji, Katakana, Hiragana, and Kanji. In fact, I got 99% on my last Japanese exam, mostly because I spent a lot of time doing extra reading and trying to learn as much as I could. One of the reasons that I'd really like to attend this school is that you have an excellent Japanese program that I'm very interested in and there is an opportunity to go on exchange to Japan in Year 10.

4) *Describe the last group project you did. What problems did you face? How could you have improved it?*

I think the situation where I learned the most about group work was last year when I was in charge of organising a school play. The whole play was organised by students, and there was so much work for us all to do. We had to organise a space, build sets and props, cast actors, practice, organise music and sort out lighting. I soon learned that the best way to deal with such a situation was to make sure that tasks were delegated appropriately and that everyone knew what their role was. I made a chart of everyone's responsibilities and arranged weekly meetings to check everyone's progress. The play ended up going really well. Because I had this learning experience, I now find group work much more easy and fun.

5) What would your ideal class timetable be?

One of the main reasons I would like to attend this school is so that I can study a lot of different subjects. Ideally, my timetable would start with English and maths when I feel freshest. After recess, I'd like to exercise my creative side by learning a second language, some art or some music. After lunch, I'd like to end the day with some science and some history. I love art and music and I think it's important to have a balance between artistic subjects and more scientific subjects. That's why I'm so excited by the possibility of attending a school that offers such a wide variety of subjects.

6) What is your favourite book and why?

If I had to narrow it down, I'd say that my favourite book is *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien. I read it when I was seven and it was the book that first inspired me to write my own stories. I love reading and writing fantasy stories and I think that, if I hadn't read *The Hobbit*, I might not even have this hobby. It's amazing how books are able to change your life like that.

7) What do you like to do in your free time?

When I'm not studying, my favourite thing to do is to play soccer. My current school doesn't have a soccer team so I play in my local league. I'm a goalkeeper. Last year, we went from twelfth on the ladder and came back to win the grand final. I saw on your newsletter that the Year 10 students recently won the grand final and that you have a really great soccer team. If I'm given the opportunity to get in, I would definitely love to join the team.

8) What do you think would be the main problem that will affect people in the next 50 years?

I think global warming is a major issue that the scientists of the future are going to have to deal with. The fact that we still rely so heavily on fossil fuels like coal and petrol is a big problem. If humanity is going to be happy and healthy in the future, my generation is going to have to do a lot of work in developing cleaner forms of energy such as solar and wind power. One of the reasons I enjoy studying science is that I know that any one of my classmates, even me, could be the one who figures out how to save the world.

9) Your friends are being bullied online. What would you do?

Online bullying is a big problem these days. This situation has actually happened to me. Last year a friend of mine was being picked on online. People were posting mean captions on a picture of her. I think the most important thing to do firstly is to talk to your friend. I asked if she was ok and if there was anything I could do. We decided that we should talk to her parents about it and her parents spoke to the school about it. Often the bullies don't know that they are harming others until they are told about it. Our teacher helped out and managed to sort the situation out without making too big a fuss over it. I think it's important to deal with these situations offline. If you retaliate online, you could just make the situation worse. I'm glad that I know what to do if I face this situation in the future.

10) If you go back in time, what is the first place you would visit and why?

I would probably go back 50 years to visit my grandparents and tell them about all the exciting things going on in my life. 50 years ago, they would have just arrived in Australia. They were probably nervous and excited and wondering whether they'd fit in. I think it would be nice to see them and tell them that things worked out ok. I think they'd like to hear that I'm doing well at school, that I have lots of nice friends and that I'm trying to get into selective schools. I think it would make them feel like they'd made the right decision and make them hopeful for the future.

11) What would you like to do with your life?

At the moment, my goal in life is to be a writer. I love writing short stories and poems and, one day, I hope to write a novel. I think that if you want to be a good writer, you have to focus on learning as much as you can about a lot of things, not just writing. The more I learn about history and science, the more interesting ideas I get and the more detail I can put into my stories. I think that going to a school where I can study a lot of different subjects, where I can meet lots of inspiring people, and where I can share my interests with others, will definitely help me improve my writing and get me closer to my goal.

12) Tell me about a time where you showed initiative.

At the start of the year, my soccer team needed a goalie. None of us knew how to play goalkeeper so nobody wanted to volunteer. But I decided to step up and volunteer. Even though it was an unfamiliar position, I made sure to work as hard as I could to be as good as I could be. I looked up tutorial videos online, read guides and trained every day. Now, I think I'm a pretty good goalkeeper. This experience taught me that sometimes you just need to take a chance, try something new and work hard to be as good as you can be.

13) Tell me about a time where you worked as a team to accomplish a goal.

When I was working on the school play, I definitely learned that you need to work as a team to achieve a goal. Also in my position as a goalkeeper. I learned that everyone has different talents that can help to achieve a goal. For example, when we were building the set, some of the team were really great at building, some were good at designing things and others were good at painting. It was really good to see everyone's different talents come together to create a really good set. As the leader of the project, it was my responsibility to recognise everyone's talents and make sure everyone's skills were being put to the right task.

14) How will this school help you achieve your goals in life?

This school will help me achieve my goals by surrounding me with other inspiring students. I find that I always work best when I am surrounded by people who are doing great things. I always write well when I'm sharing my stories with good writers. I always train harder at soccer when I'm in a team with hard-working players. At a selective school, I expect that I'll be surrounded by talented and dedicated students who care about their studies. I think this will give me the motivation and positive environment needed to achieve my academic, creative and sporting goals.

Questions for the interviewer

One of the most common, and one of the most difficult questions that will come up is this:

Do you have any questions for me?

The worst thing you can do in this situation is say no. If you are asked if you have any questions, you have a valuable opportunity to show your knowledge and interest in the school. It's a good idea to use your question as an opportunity to show what you already know. You might start by talking about a specific event that you found in their school newsletter or on the website, and then ask them how that information might relate to your interests.

For example:

"I noticed on your website/ school newsletter that your students went to China recently. I am very interested in doing something similar. How proficient were these students at Chinese before they went on their trip and what did they most get out of the experience?"

Activity:

Here are some ideas for other questions you might ask. Try to tailor them more specifically to your own interests and your chosen school. The more detailed your question is, the better.

- *What sort of programs do you have to help students transition into the new school environment?*
- *Are there streamed classes for maths and English? What is the standard that I need to attain?*
- *What opportunities does the school offer for students interested in sports?*
- *What programs can I join to develop my writing further?*
- *Are there any school bands I might be able to join?*
- *I notice that your school has a zero tolerance policy on bullying. Can you tell me more about this?*

See if you have come up with three questions that you might ask in the space below. Try to cater these questions to your own personal interests and what you already know about the school.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Part 3. Sample Interview

Example

Sam is a year 8 student who is applying for Melbourne High School. Sam is talented in maths and science but his English scores are relatively average. He plays the trumpet and is part of a small jazz band at his current high school.

Interviewer: What do you know about our school?

Sam: I know that you're one of Melbourne's most prestigious Selective Schools that is dedicated not just to academic excellence, but also excellence in culture and sports. From my perspective, I know that you value excellence in music, and you have great facilities for students who are musicians. This is what interests me most about your school. As a talented trumpeter, I would love the opportunity to attend a school that can foster my creative side, while providing academic support.

Interviewer: What would your ideal class timetable be?

Sam: I hope to have a timetable with diversity. I'd like to start the day off with music or computers to ease my way into the day. After recess, when I've had the chance to settle into the day, I'd like to have maths, English and science, when my brain is working at its best. After lunch it would be nice to finish off the day with subjects like PE or an elective like photography before home time.

I would like an opportunity to try a number of electives and see which subjects I enjoy and am talented at. Of course, due to my interest in music, I would love it if that was a part of my timetable.

Interviewer: How will this school help you to achieve your goals in life?

Sam: I think this school will give me a great opportunity to develop skills in a number of areas. I'm most interested in a career involving maths and sciences so I was excited to see that you have a range of science competitions that I can participate in such as the STAV Science Talent Search, the Rio-Tinto Big Science Competition and the Siemens

Science Experience as well as programs like the National Youth Science Forum and workshops at the Melbourne University to extend and develop a deeper interest in these areas. Having said that, I think the best way to be successful and achieve your goals is to be well rounded and try as many new things as possible, and I think that with the range of programs on offer, Melbourne High will help me achieve my goals in life.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me?

Sam: Your website mentions that you have a number of school bands. I was wondering if you could tell me more about what opportunities I might have to join a jazz or brass band. What does it involve?

Part 4. Interview Tips

Remember, the key to a successful interview is not just what you say, but how you say it. You want to make sure you seem confident, happy and are able to express yourself clearly. Here are some tips on how to make a good impression.

Bad Impression

- X Has untidy hair and unironed clothes
- X Says “hey” or “what’s up” when greeted. Does not shake the interviewer’s hand.
- X Slouches when standing and sitting.
- X Avoids eye contact with interviewer.
- X Looks grumpy or bored.
- X Gives one word responses.
- X Doesn’t ask questions.

Good Impression

- ✓ Addresses the interviewer by name and give them a firm handshake.
- ✓ Sits up straight and looks alert.
- ✓ Looks the interviewer in the eye.
- ✓ Smiles and looks happy throughout.
- ✓ Uses the TEEL structure to give responses.
- ✓ Asks questions.

Part 5. Advice For Parents

Parents will sometimes be invited into the one-on-one interview. When this happens, parents are often confused about what their role is. How much should they say? Should they correct their child if they make a mistake? Here are some tips for parents.

Things To Avoid

1. Don't interrupt your child

This may seem obvious, but interrupting your child is one of the most common mistakes that parents make in these interviews. Remember, the interviewer wants to know how well your child can express their ideas. If you talk over your child it can make it seem as if your child doesn't have any ideas of their own and worse, stops your child from making a meaningful contribution to the discussion. So, even if your child makes a few mistakes or answers some questions insufficiently, resist the urge to jump in. You are there as a support to your child, and should only speak when addressed, otherwise you may inadvertently hinder their chances of success.

2. Don't put your child on the spot

Your child will no doubt be very nervous during their interview. If possible, try to avoid making this worse by putting them on the spot. Avoid phrases such as "Chris, tell the principal about how good you are at maths," or "Chris, tell the principal about your hobbies."

Your child may have been thinking of something to say but may forget if they are asked something different by you.

Things You Should Do

1. Support and clarify things that your child has already said

One of the best things you can do is show confidence in your child by supporting and clarifying things that they have already said. If you are asked a question, try to use it as an opportunity to back up your child's points. For example, if you are asked what your child's strengths are, say something like "well, as Chris mentioned, he's a keen musician. In fact, last summer he played at the local festival in front of 100 people and the audience couldn't stop raving about it."

2. Be positive

Remember that your child is probably trying to impress you, as well as the interviewer. You can make them feel a lot more comfortable and confident if you respond to them positively. Smile when your child looks at you, try to act confidently. When they say something interesting, nod your head to show them that you are interested in what they have to say. This will make a big difference in how they speak and act.

Part 6. Some Final Tips

1. Dress appropriately for the occasion as you want to make a positive first impression. For boys, wear pants, proper shoes and a shirt. For girls, wear neat business casual clothes.
2. If you are stuck on what to say, take a moment, breathe and count to three. You have earned your place there and have a lot to offer the school.
3. Make sure you go to the bathroom before the interview so you are comfortable throughout your interview.
4. Ensure your face and nails are clean and your hair is pulled back if longer than shoulder length.
5. The power of positive thinking and visualisation is often underestimated. Every night leading up to the event, clearly picture yourself speaking clearly and confidently. Tell yourself that you can do this!

Good luck!

APPENDIX: Answers To The 9 Letter Puzzle

9 letter words

Bacterial - Bacteria are microscopic single-celled organisms that thrive in diverse environments. They can live within soil, in the ocean and inside the human gut.

Calibrate- Calibration is the process of finding a relationship between two quantities that are unknown. When one of quantity is known, which is made or set with one device, another measurement is made as similar way as possible with the first device using a second device.

8 letter words

Bacteria- Bacteria are microscopic single-celled organisms that thrive in diverse environments. They can live within soil, in the ocean and inside the human gut.

Tailrace- Tailrace is a race for conveying water away from a point of industrial application (as a waterwheel or turbine) after use.

7 letter words

Abreact - To release (repressed emotions) by acting out

Actable- capable of being acted or suitable for acting

Article- a written composition in prose, usually nonfiction, on a specific topic, forming an independent part of a book or other publication, as a newspaper or magazine.

Bearcat - a person or thing that fights or acts with force or fierceness.

Cabaret - entertainment held in a nightclub or restaurant while the audience eat or drink at tables.

Calibre - the quality of someone's character or the level of their ability.

Citable- to quote (a passage, book, author, etc.), especially as an authority

Librate - to oscillate or move from side to side or between two points.

Ratable- Capable of being appraised, apportioned, assigned, estimated, or rated.

Recital - a performance of a programme of music by a soloist or small group.

Triable- Subject or liable to judicial trial. able to be investigated and decided judicially.

6 letter words

Ablate - to remove or destroy especially by cutting, abrading, or evaporating

Acetal - an organic compound formed by the condensation of two alcohol molecules with an aldehyde molecule.

Aerial - a type of freestyle skiing in which the skier jumps from a ramp and carries out manoeuvres in the air.

Albeit - used for introducing a comment that slightly changes or reduces the effect of what you said before it

Albite - a sodium-rich mineral of the feldspar group, typically white, occurring in silicate rocks.

Arable - capable of producing crops; suitable for farming; suited to the plow and for tillage

Atrial - Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal heart rhythm characterised by rapid and irregular beating.

Baiter- Agent noun of bait; one who baits, as with a fishhook.

Barite- a mineral consisting of barium sulphate, typically occurring as colourless prismatic crystals or thin white flakes.

Cablet- a small cable; specifically : a cable-laid rope less than 20 centimetres in circumference.

Cartel- an association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition.

Citral- a fragrant liquid occurring in citrus and lemongrass oils and used in flavourings and perfumes.

Claret - a red wine from Bordeaux, or wine of a similar character made elsewhere.

Eclair - a long, thin individual cake of choux pastry filled with cream and topped with chocolate icing.

Labret - an object such as a small piece of shell, bone, or stone inserted into the lip as an ornament in some cultures.

Lacier - made of, resembling, or trimmed with lace.

Lariat - a rope used as a lasso or for tethering.

Racial- of or relating to the social construct of race : racial diversity;

Rectal- relating to or affecting the rectum.

Retail- the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale.

Rictal- of or relating to the rictus

Tribal- A tribe is viewed, developmentally or historically, as a social group existing before the development of, or outside, states. A tribe is a distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society.

6 letter words that may be proper nouns:

Albert- a watch chain with a bar at one end for attaching to a buttonhole.

Altaic- a group of related languages spoken in Asia and southeastern Europe

Arabic- the Semitic language of the Arabs, spoken by some 150 million people throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Baltic-relating to the Baltic Sea or the region surrounding it.

Claire-The name Claire is a Latin baby name.

5 letter words

Abaci- a device for making arithmetic calculations, consisting of a frame set with rods on which balls or beads are moved.

Abate- (of something unpleasant or severe) become less intense or widespread.

abler-having the power, skill, means, or opportunity to do something.

Acari- a large order (or subclass) of small arachnids which comprises the mites and ticks. They are distinguished by an apparent lack of body divisions.

Acerb- Sour, bitter, and harsh to the taste, as unripe fruit.

Alate-Alate is an adjective that refers to wings or winglike structures. In entomology it refers to the winged form of a social insect (especially ants or termites, but the term can also be applied to aphids and some thrips).

Alert-quick to notice any unusual and potentially dangerous or difficult circumstances; vigilant.

Altar- A raised place on which sacrifices and gifts are offered in some religions. A platform or table used as a center of worship in Christian ceremonies and services

Alter-change in character or composition, typically in a comparatively small but significant way.

Areal-The word “areal” refers to an area, which is an expanse of space or a region of land. Not to be confused with “aerial” which means of or relating to the air.

Areca- a tropical Asian palm.

Ariel- a gazelle found in the Middle East and North Africa.

Artel- (in pre-revolutionary Russia) a cooperative association of craftsmen living and working together.

Atria- an open-roofed entrance hall or central court in an ancient Roman house.

Baler- a machine for making up material such as paper, hay, or cotton into bales.

Baric- Of or pertaining to barium. Of or pertaining to weight, especially to the weight or pressure of the atmosphere as measured by a barometer.

Blare- make or cause to make a loud, harsh sound.

Bleat- to utter the cry of a sheep, goat, or calf or a sound resembling such a cry.

Brace- a device fitted to something, in particular a weak or injured part of the body, to give support.

Bract- a modified leaf or scale, typically small, with a flower or flower cluster in its axil. Bracts are sometimes larger and more brightly coloured than the true flower, as in poinsettia.

Brail- small ropes that are led from the leech of a fore-and-aft sail to pulleys on the mast for temporarily furling it.

Cabal- a secret political clique or faction.

Caber- a roughly trimmed tree trunk used in the Scottish Highland sport of tossing the caber . This involves holding the caber upright and running forward to toss it so that it lands on the opposite end.

Cable- a thick rope of wire or hemp used for construction, mooring ships, and towing vehicles.

Carat- a unit of weight for precious stones and pearls, equivalent to 200 milligrams.

Cater- provide people with food and drink at a social event or other gathering.

Clear -easy to perceive, understand, or interpret.

Cleat- A metal or wooden object that is attached to something (such as a boat or dock) and around which a rope can be tied. A piece of rubber, wood, or metal that is fastened to the bottom of a shoe or boot to prevent slipping

Crate- a slatted wooden case used for transporting goods.

Eclat- brilliant display or effect.

Irate- feeling or characterized by great anger.

Labia- feeling or characterized by great anger.

lacer- a netlike ornamental fabric made of threads by hand or machine.

Later- at a time in the future : at a time following an earlier time

Libra- (in ancient Rome) a unit of weight, equivalent to 12 ounces (0.34 kg). It was the forerunner of the pound.

Ratal- the amount on which rates are assessed; ratable value

Ratel- a badger-like mammal with a white or grey back and black underparts, native to Africa and Asia. In Africa it is attracted by the honeyguide bird to bee nests, which it breaks open to gain access to the grubs and honey.

React- act in response to something; respond in a particular way.

Tiara- a jewelled ornamental band worn on the front of a woman's hair. a high diadem encircled with three crowns and worn by a pope.

Trace- follow or mark the course or position of (something) with one's eye, mind, or finger.

Trail- a mark or a series of signs or objects left behind by the passage of someone or something.

Trial- a formal examination of evidence by a judge, typically before a jury, in order to decide guilt in a case of criminal or civil proceedings.

4 letter words

Abet- encourage or assist (someone) to do something wrong, in particular to commit a crime.

Able- having the power, skill, means, or opportunity to do something.

Acre- a unit of land area equal to 4,840 square yards (0.405 hectare).

Alba- a shrub rose of a variety with grey-green leaves and pinkish-white, sweet-scented flowers.

Alit- to dismount from a horse, descend from a vehicle, etc.

Area- a region or part of a town, a country, or the world.

Aria- a long accompanied song for a solo voice, typically one in an opera or oratorio.

Bail- the temporary release of an accused person awaiting trial, sometimes on condition that a sum of money is lodged to guarantee their appearance in court.

Bait- food placed on a hook or in a net, trap, or fishing area to entice fish or other animals as prey.

Bale- a large wrapped or bound bundle of paper, hay, or cotton.

Bare- without covering or clothing; naked; nude:

Bate - to moderate or restrain

Bear- to accept, tolerate, or endure something, especially something unpleasant:

Beat- strike (a person or an animal) repeatedly and violently so as to hurt or injure them, typically with an implement such as a club or whip.

Beta- the second letter of the Greek alphabet (B, β), transliterated as 'b'

Blat- to cry like a calf or sheep

Brae- a hillside especially along a river

Brat - a child, typically one that is badly behaved.

Care- the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something.

Cart- a strong open vehicle with two or four wheels, typically used for carrying loads and pulled by a horse.

Cate- a choice food; a delicacy.

Crab- a crustacean, found chiefly on seashores, with a broad carapace, stalked eyes, and five pairs of legs, the first pair of which are modified as pincers.

Earl- a British nobleman ranking above a viscount and below a marquess.

Lace- a fine open fabric of cotton or silk, made by looping, twisting, or knitting thread in patterns and used especially for trimming garments.

Lair- a place where a wild animal lives.

Late- doing something or taking place after the expected, proper, or usual time.

Liar- a person who tells lies.

Lira- (until the introduction of the euro in 2002) the basic monetary unit of Italy

Race- a competition between runners, horses, vehicles, etc. to see which is the fastest in covering a set course.

Rail- a bar or series of bars fixed on upright supports or attached to a wall or ceiling, serving as part of a barrier or used to hang things on.

Rale- an abnormal rattling sound heard when examining unhealthy lungs with a stethoscope.

Rata- a large New Zealand tree of the myrtle family, with crimson flowers and hard red timber.

Rate- a measure, quantity, or frequency, typically one measured against another quantity or measure.

Real- actually existing as a thing or occurring in fact; not imagined or supposed.

Tail- the hindmost part of an animal, especially when prolonged beyond the rest of the body, such as the flexible extension of the backbone in a vertebrate, the feathers at the hind end of a bird, or a terminal appendage in an insect.

Tala- a traditional rhythmic pattern in classical Indian music.

Talc- a white, grey, or pale green soft mineral with a greasy feel

Tale- a fictitious or true narrative or story, especially one that is imaginatively recounted.

Tali- the large bone in the ankle

Teal- a small freshwater duck, typically with a greenish band on the wing that is most prominent in flight.

Tear- a hole or split in something caused by it having been pulled apart forcefully.

4 letter words that may be proper nouns

Abel- Abel was a son of Adam and Eve in the Bible. According to the Bible, he was the first person to die, murdered by his brother Cain.

Arab- a member of a Semitic people, originally from the Arabian peninsula and neighbouring territories, inhabiting much of the Middle East and North Africa.

Bali- Bali is an island and province of Indonesia.

Balt- a speaker of a Baltic language; a Lithuanian or Latvian.