

Preparing for a College Campus Visit

Know Before You Go:

It may be tempting to just yell "road trip!" and head out to campuses, but you'll get more out of your visits if you plan ahead.

Research the College

It's important to know something about the college before you arrive on its campus, especially if you have an interview scheduled.

- Spend time on the college website – visit the link for prospective students. Many of your questions will be answered there.
- Talk to currently enrolled students or alumni about their college. Some college websites let you contact them online, or you can get contact information from the admission office.

Scheduling Your Trip

Pick a time that's convenient for you, but try to go when classes are in session. That way, you can sit in on a lecture or stay in a dorm overnight. You'll only get a true feel for the campus if you're there on a day when classes are in full swing.

Contact the admissions office through the college website or by email or phone to get details and make a reservation. Schedule your time on campus to make sure you'll have time for everything you want to do:

- Find out how often college tours run and if you have to sign up in advance – this information should be available on the school website under Admissions
- Be sure to get a map of the school. You don't want to spend half your day trying to park or find the admission office
- If an interview is suggested, make an appointment. Also, consider meeting with the financial aid office
- If you're curious about a club, program or sport, arrange to attend a practice, rehearsal, or meeting

When to Visit

Schoolwork, your job, your parents... choosing the right time to go on campus visits may seem like a complicated procedure. But when you're planning your trip, just be sure not to lose sight of the reason you're going: to see if the school is a good fit for you. This means you need to see the college when classes are meeting and day-to-day activities are taking place. In other words, go when the college is in session.

During the Week

Weekdays are ideal for campus visits - campuses are generally in full swing. Since junior and senior years can be busy for you, though, it's important not to let visits interfere with your schoolwork. February and April vacations are the best time for visits - colleges are in session and you won't need to miss school to visit.

The Best Seasons

Juniors should plan visits in the spring; late summer and early September before senior year are also convenient times to visit since many colleges begin their fall semester as early as mid-August. Seniors should finish visits by mid-October to allow enough time to meet application deadlines.

Winter/Spring of Junior Year

Juniors who have researched colleges should consider using February and April vacations for college visits. Spring is also a good time of year if you play fall sports or are considering early action or early decision with application deadlines in November of senior year.

When Not to Go

- When colleges aren't in session: Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas week, winter and spring breaks, Summer
- When classes aren't meeting: Reading period, Exam weeks, Weekends
- When the admission office is closed to visitors

Check specific dates with each college so you don't arrive when the campus is deserted.

Note: If you can't visit a particular school visit www.campustours.com for a virtual tour or visit the school's website - many offer online tours; however - there is no substitute for an actual campus visit!

What to Expect + Things You Should Do on a College Visit

Campus visits can range from a quick tour to an overnight stay, from a casual guided tour to a formal presentation. Be sure to ask how long the whole visit will take so you can be prepared. Most campus visits will include an information session and a campus tour.

Here are some suggestions for ways to make the most of your visit:

- ▶ Take pictures and bring a notebook to write down your impressions. These things will help remind you what you like or didn't like about a particular campus
- ▶ Arrange an interview with an admissions counselor
- ▶ Visit the financial aid office
- ▶ Visit the career center and academic support center
- ▶ Check out the **FRESHMEN** residence halls, libraries, student union, athletic/recreation facilities, etc . . .
- ▶ Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day life is like, what student organizations and activities are available
- ▶ Attend an extra-curricular activity (sporting event, theater, etc...)
- ▶ Eat in the dining hall
- ▶ Read the student newspaper, listen to the school radio station,
- ▶ Wander around campus by yourself (after the tour)**and drive around the community surrounding the campus**
- ▶ Talk to students – ask why they chose this school, what they do on weekends, what they like/don't like about the school
- ▶ Sit in on a class or two in a subject that interests you
- ▶ Talk to a professor in your chosen major/in a subject that interests you
- ▶ Imagine yourself attending this college for four years

Potential Questions to Ask on your Tour

- What's the social life like on campus? Do people go home for the weekends?
What do you do for fun?

- What if I have issues with my roommate or dorm? Can you change and who will

help me with this?

- What do you like about this college? What would you change?
- What are the most popular majors?
- How difficult is it to change majors? Who helps you do this?
- What other colleges did you apply to? Why did you choose this one?
- How effective is the academic advising?
- What programs do they have to help students adjust to college life?
- Why do students typically leave or transfer from this school? What are your retention rates (how many students return for sophomore year)?
- What percentage of students graduate in four years?
- Are there options for a study-abroad year or semester?
- Who teaches the classes (professors, graduate students, etc...)?
- What is the average class size (particularly in your intended major)?
- What are the RA's like (resident assistants)? Do they care about your concerns?
- How safe is the campus? What security measures are in place?
- Is there parking available; can students have cars on campus?
- Are students required to live on campus? If yes, for how many years?
- Is housing guaranteed? If yes, for how many years?