

# COLLEGE VISIT GUIDE



College visits are an important part of the college search process because they are the most reliable tool for knowing if you will feel at home on a college campus. If possible, you should plan to visit every school that you are seriously and strongly considering to get a sense for what life is like on each campus.

No virtual tour or information on a website is a substitute for how being on that campus will make you feel. It is common for students to change their mind after a college visit because the campus just didn't feel like a good fit for them during their visit. You have to be able to imagine yourself living life on that campus every day for the next four years. Without a physical, in-person visit to the college, you may enroll and get there and absolutely hate it. Knowing that before you enroll is far better!

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## TIPS FOR A PRODUCTIVE COLLEGE VISIT

### 1) Visit During the School Year

Make sure to schedule your visit when classes are actually in session and people will be on campus. Scheduling a tour in the summer when no one is around will not give you a good feel for what campus is like when it's full. Likewise, scheduling a tour during a special event won't give you an accurate read on every day life on campus.

### 2) Use Your Senses

It is helpful to see, hear, and feel what the campus is like. Oftentimes when you visit a college, you will just \*know\* whether it is a good fit for you or not. Trust your gut when you get those strong feelings one way or another.



### 3) Talk to Students

During your visit, be sure to talk to students on campus about what it's like to go to school there and live on campus. It can be intimidating to walk up to a perfect stranger and ask them a question, but it is the best way to get honest feedback about the school from the experts.

#### 4) Make a Stop at Admissions

A visit to the admissions office to introduce yourself can only help you! Let them know what about the school is interesting to you and they can help direct you to the best place to get more information or where to go on your tour. Be sure to get their contact information and send them a follow up email to thank them for taking the time to talk with you. BONUS: Some colleges allow prospective students to interview with an admissions counselor during their visit; if this is an option, don't pass it up!

#### 5) Take the Official Campus Tour

You definitely don't want to miss the official tour of the campus (make sure to register if you need to reserve a spot). This is the time where you will learn valuable information about the campus and where the school has planned to show you all the best things about their campus. While you are on the tour, be sure to check out the bulletin boards and flyers and pick up a school newspaper if available to get a sense of the types of things that happen on campus.



#### 6) Venture Out on Your Own

Wandering around on your own will give you an opportunity to check out all of the buildings of interest on the campus. The official tour might not include the school's less attractive areas, so this can be valuable to see the full picture. Make sure to check out the library and the first-year dorms and any other facilities that are important to you.

#### 7) Spend the Night

Some colleges and universities offer overnight programs and visits where you can stay overnight, usually with a current student as a guide. This will allow you to get a deeper understanding of life on campus and interact more with current students. Even if you can't stay overnight, see if you can sit in on a couple classes. Check the schedule before you arrive or speak with the admissions office about your options.



## 8) Keep a Record of All Visits

Be sure to make detailed notes about your experience on each campus you visit. This will be helpful later when you go back to review and start to make decisions about applications or acceptances. Making notes to your future self about what you liked and disliked about each college or about how you felt on campus during your visit will be so useful.

This [College Visit Checklist & Summary](#) can help you keep track of your notes and identify what information you should gather on each of your college visits.

## 9) Do As Much As Possible

During your visit, try to take in as much of the campus and college experience as possible. Visiting for one hour may not give you enough information about the school to make an informed decision, unless you know right away that it's not a good fit for you (remember to trust your gut).

- **Places to Visit:** This [Campus Exploration Activity Checklist](#) lists some of the most recommended places on campus to visit with suggestions for activities to complete at each place to give you more information about the college or university and whether it's a good fit for you.
- **Experience It Yourself:** Getting to experience some parts of college life and see it for yourself can be a great way to spend your college visit. Here are some suggestions for things to do to round out your experience:
  - ◇ Go to a sporting event.
  - ◇ Take the campus tour.
  - ◇ Eat a meal on campus or at a restaurant frequented by students.
  - ◇ Attend a school orientation session.
  - ◇ Visit the campus library and find books that interest you.
  - ◇ Read a campus newspaper or review their school news site.
  - ◇ Attend a performance.
  - ◇ Shadow a current student.
  - ◇ Check out the gym and sporting facilities (if that's of interest to you).



## 10) Visit Your Favorites Last

As you visit colleges, you will get better with each one. You will better know what to expect, become more familiar with campuses overall, and become more confident in navigating and speaking with individuals. For this reason, save your favorite schools for last. This will ensure you are the most prepared for those visits and able to get the information you really want and need.