



How to Plan Successful College Visits

Choose the Elements of the Visit

Decide which of the following you will try to do on each campus:

- **Join a group tour** -- Be sure to sign in at the admissions office. Smile, be interested and polite. You never know who will be manning the desk; at small schools, sometimes even the Director of Admissions takes a turn!
- **Attend a group information session** – Try to go up to the presenter afterward, introduce yourself, ask a question or two, find out if a rep will be visiting your high school.
- **Eat a meal in the dining hall or just walk around.** Find three students, introduce yourself (I'm thinking of applying here. Do you have a minute?) and ask each one the same two questions: What do you like about this college? What would you change?
- **Pick up the campus newspaper.**
- **Take a look around.** What are your reactions to the physical campus environment? Consider climate, culture, architecture, relationship to surroundings.
- **Sit in on a class.** It's best to arrange this ahead of time, although sometimes the admissions office has a list of open courses. Try to go up to the professor before or afterward, introduce yourself. Send a thank you note when you get home.
- **Meet with a professor.** Introduce yourself, say which high school you attend, mention your interest in his specialty (and give examples, if possible). Ask his/her advice about studying that field in college. How is the subject approached at this particular school? Can you suggest some books, courses or experiences that will prepare me for a major in your subject?
- **Meet with a coach (sports) or special faculty (e.g. drama, music or dance), if this applies.** Ask what's distinctive about the college and the department. Why do you think I should enroll here? Be sure to check out the facilities for those areas, if they are important to you.
- **Attend a club meeting or sports practice.**
- **Check out the career services center.**
- **Explore the area around the campus.**
- **Stay overnight.** This is usually reserved for fall of senior year, and only places you are seriously considering.

Plan the Logistics

- Contact the admissions office to sign up for official visits and to get contact information for professors, coaches etc.
- Use GoSeeCampus.com to plan your route and itinerary
- Contact any students you may know who currently attend the schools you will be visiting.

Prepare Some Questions

- You can, and should, talk to everyone you can: admissions officers, tour guides, professors, the receptionist at the Student Union, coaches, athletes, and random students you stop on campus



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or sit near in the dining hall. Note that you can also use the following list of questions when you talk to college reps at your high school or at a college fair.

- You might choose a single question, perhaps one suggested by your Do What You Are Profile, that you will ask of a student at each school you visit. It's one way to compare apples to apples.
- Be sure to take plenty of notes in CPP. (You can type right on your phone, if that is your thing.) In any event, be sure to fill out a Campus Visit Report. You could also print some out to bring with you and upload them with handwritten notes when you get home.

Some Sample Questions:

- What is distinctive about the education here?
- What do the students seem to be like?
- How competitive are students? Do they work together? Tell me about the most recent time you worked on a group project.
- How often do you interact with people of different social, religious or ethnic backgrounds?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships? Are professors accessible? Do faculty members participate in student activities?
- Tell me about the last time you had a conversation with a professor outside of class.
- What are some of the best and worst classes you've taken?
- How easy/difficult is it to get into the classes you want? How does that affect the four-year graduation rate?
- Where do you go for help – with writing, math, disabilities, internships, questions about grad school?
- What do you do for fun on campus? What's a typical weekend like?
- Where do students live? Which are the best dorms? What are they like?
- What about safety on campus?
- What type of student would thrive here?
- If you could change one thing about the school, what would it be?

And ask yourself . . .

- Am I smiling as I walk around?
- Do I like the look and feel of the campus?
- Do the students seem like people I'd enjoy spending time with?
- Do I feel excited by the prospect of spending four years here?

Some things to keep in mind:

- Write up notes and post them to your College Planner Pro account as soon as possible so you don't forget your impressions. Copy the Campus Visit Report into a note and fill it out for each school – again, helping to compare apples to apples. Taking pictures can also help.
- Don't try to see too many colleges at once; two in one day is plenty. And there is a limit to how many days you can keep up the pace. If you're on a long road trip, build in some non-college-related fun stops to break it up.



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- Some people *love* to visit colleges; others, not so much. Know your tendencies and plan accordingly!