

# College Visits

Here are some tips to make the most out of your college visits.

## When to Visit

Because you want to see if the school is a good fit for you, visit when students are taking classes, if at all possible. Be sure to visit during your sophomore or junior year, or during the fall of your senior year. Try not to schedule a visit during holidays, the college's winter and spring breaks, or during reading periods/exam weeks. After you've been admitted, many schools offer students a chance to spend a night or two on campus. This is a good time to make some final comparisons between schools so that you can choose the school that's right for you.

## Preparing for Your Visit

It is important to know something about the college before you go visit. Review the guidebook and any other materials you have about the college, including the latest information on the college's website. Find out when campus tours are offered and if you are required to sign up for one in advance. Bring a campus map with you and locate the admissions office and visitor parking areas before arriving. If interviews are available, schedule one at least two weeks in advance. If you are interested in athletics, schedule a separate meeting with a coach. Also, develop a list of what characteristics are important to you and take this list to the schools so you can compare them. If you will be visiting more than one college during your trip, don't schedule more than two colleges on any given day. Check out the following guides to help you organize your college trips:

Princeton Review's *Visiting College Campuses*.

- [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com)
- [www.ecampustours.com](http://www.ecampustours.com)

## What to Bring

To remember key facts about your visit, bring a notebook and camera to record key places and events. Take notes about the aspects of college most important to you.

## What to Do and See

First, take a campus tour and ask relevant questions of your tour guide. Then, have an interview with an admissions officer if available. Also, attend any group information sessions offered. See if you can attend a class or two. You may want to attend the same type of class (i.e. English) at each school so you can compare them more easily. Eat a meal in the dining hall, not only to sample the cuisine, but to see how students interact

with each other. Look at a dorm. Stop and talk to as many students and professors as possible. Ask students what they like and dislike about the school, and listen to student conversations to hear what they're talking (or complaining) about. Read the student newspapers and campus bulletin boards. Walk around the campus, go in the library, and listen to the college's radio station. Picture yourself as a student here.

## **Advice to Parents**

It is important to let your student make his or her own impressions and do most of the talking. Be a casual observer and ask a few, non-judgmental questions. These trips are about finding a school where the student feels at home, not you!

## **Overnight Visits**

Many schools allow students to spend a night in a dorm. The best times to plan overnight visits are before applications are due (to see if you want to apply) and after acceptances come out. Be aware that some of your impressions from this type of visit will center on your student host. Hopefully, your host will introduce you to lots of other students so that you can get a broad sample of the types of students at the school.

## **After Your Return**

When you return from your trip, write a short thank you note to any interviewers or administrators who were particularly helpful. Additionally, put all of your notes and/or pictures in the appropriate college file.

## **Sort It All Out**

You'll be left with many different impressions of the campuses you visit. Be pragmatic. Don't choose one school over another because the tour guide was more personable, or because it was a sunnier day. Try to really imagine yourself on each campus.

## **Virtual Tours**

Many colleges now offer virtual tours of campus online. Although there is nothing like walking the quad to get a feel for a campus, virtual tours are useful if you can't visit personally.