

Make the Most of a Campus Visit

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You can gain valuable information about colleges and universities in which you're interested through brochures, web sites, college guides, and recommendations. But how do you know if a college is a good fit for you? The best way to find out is to tour the campus, attend classes, and meet members of the campus community.

The key to a successful campus visit is planning ahead. Contact the admissions office to ask about special visit days, office hours, and available activities. Do not make nonrefundable travel arrangements until you confirm with the admissions office that the campus is open for visitors.

When you visit, be sure to attend information sessions and tours sponsored by the admissions office, but don't miss an opportunity to just hang out and soak up the atmosphere. Keep an open mind – a visit may confirm what you already know about a school, or it can open your eyes to new opportunities. Take notes and bring your camera, so you can remember all you see and hear.

If you have time, ask the admissions office to schedule a meeting with a professor in a subject area that interests you; most professors welcome visitors. Check out the surroundings. Visit the classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and studios. Find a spot to study or relax. Can you imagine yourself there?

Be sure to visit the residence halls. Find out what's available, including fitness centers, laundry facilities, study rooms, music practice rooms, and shops or stores. Have a meal on campus. Ask yourself if you would be comfortable living on this campus.

Go to the student activities office to see what clubs and organizations are active. Ask a current student what he or she does at night and on the weekends. Explore community service activities. If you're interested in sports, find out what varsity, intramural, club sports the college offers. Schedule an appointment with a coach if you have questions about a particular sport.

If you're unable to make a campus visit, call the admissions office and ask if a university representative will be visiting your high school, attending a college fair or holding an informational meeting in your area. You may also wish to request a copy of the university's DVD.