

Preparing for a College Campus Visit

Know before You Go

It may be tempting to just yell "roadtrip!" 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.

- Review the viewbooks, course catalogs, and any other materials the college sends to prospective students.
- Spend some time surfing their Web site.
- Talk to currently enrolled students or alumni about their college. Some college Web sites let you contact them online, or you can get their contact information from the admission office.

Scheduling Your Trip

Pick a time that's convenient to 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.

Schedule your time on campus, too, 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.
- 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 officer.
- If you're curious about a club, program, or a sport, arrange to attend a practice, rehearsal, or meeting.

Pack a Camera and Notebook

Was it X College or Y University that had that excellent exercise equipment in the gym? Where did I talk to that cool psychology professor? You think you'll remember everything, but you'll be surprised how colleges start to merge after you've seen a few.

What's Important to You?

Make a list of what college characteristics are most important to you, so you know what to evaluate. Do you feel overwhelmed in a large lecture hall? Check out the class size. Do you have your heart set on joining a sorority or fraternity? See what the Greek system is like on campus. Is there a particular major that you want to pursue? Talk to current students or professors in that department.

Develop a list of your preferences. Take this list to the schools that you plan to visit, and compare them when you get back home.