

# COLLEGE VISITATION PACKET



Enclosed you will find many suggestions to help you experience a successful college visit.

Feel free to “pick and choose” those items that will best prepare you for your visit. Being prepared with questions will help you to gather the most information from each college.

~The Guidance Staff

## Questions often asked by Admissions Counselors during the college interview:

1. Why do you want to attend this school?
2. Tell us about yourself. How would you describe yourself?
3. What would you consider to be your major strength?
4. What would you consider to be your major weakness?
5. What do you see yourself doing in 20 years?
6. What has been the most important event in your life?
7. What courses do you enjoy least while in high school? Why?
8. What courses did you enjoy most while in high school? Why?
9. How do you spend your leisure time?
10. What books, magazines, etc., have you read during the past year?
11. What do you do for social activities?
12. List a half dozen adjectives that you feel best describe yourself.
13. Do you know the career for which you wish to prepare?
14. What do you think your contribution can be to our college?
15. How do you explain this low grade?
16. Is your math score a true reflection of your abilities?
17. What work experiences have you had?
18. What have you done during your summers?
19. How much time do you devote to studying?
20. What individual most influenced your life?
21. What would you consider to be the major problems college students face today?
22. Do you think that your high school grades are an accurate assessment of your aptitude?
23. If you were conducting this interview, what questions would you ask?
24. Why should we select you?

**Note:** There are numerous contemporary issues which may be discussed at an interview. The best vehicles for preparation are reading a daily newspaper and at least one weekly news magazine. GOOD LUCK!

**Note: The following information was obtained from [educationplanner.org](http://educationplanner.org)**

## Checklist for Making Arrangements to Visit Campuses

The college selection process is both exciting and nerve-wracking. Putting time into planning your campus visits can take a lot of tension out of the process. Here are some suggested steps, arranged as a checklist.

### Planning Your Visits

- \_\_\_ Check with your high school about its policy for taking time off to visit campuses. Work within the policy and your parents' time off.
- \_\_\_ Plan with your parents how many schools you can see in one trip. Visiting no more than five schools in three days is a good rule. If any schools on your list are within an hour or two from home, see those in day trips.
- \_\_\_ Figure out driving distances between schools and which schools make the most sense to visit on the same day and during the same trip. Work out the logistics, and then make hotel or motel reservations.
- \_\_\_ Check your research for each college and university to see if you need an interview. Try to schedule your interview with your first choice school after you have had a few other interviews, so you will be familiar with the interview situation and feel more confident.
- \_\_\_ Check the college's catalog or the college's Web site for directions.
- \_\_\_ Go over the directions with a map before you set off on your trip. If you are flying, rent a car ahead of time and figure out the driving time from the airport to the school or to where you are staying if you are flying in the night before. Figure in time for getting stalled in traffic and getting lost—regardless of how good the directions are.

### Calling to Set up a Tour and an Interview

- \_\_\_ Call the college or university to set up an appointment at least 3-5 days before you plan to visit. Have your list of two or three possible dates and your questions ready. The sooner you call, the greater the likelihood that you will get the date you want. Depending on the size of the college or university—the bigger the school, the more departments—call the campus visitors' center, information services officer, or the admissions office to set up your tour.
- \_\_\_ If you make your tour arrangements through the visitors' center or information services office, you will still need to call the admissions office to set up your interview.
- \_\_\_ In addition to the regular tour, ask if you can visit classes or see the labs or the sports facilities—whatever is important to you.
- \_\_\_ Ask if you can speak with professors in your major, students who share your same interests, or a coach for your sport—whatever person or group will give you the best information about what is important to you. You may need to make calls to particular departments to arrange appointments with professors and students, to the office that handles student activities to set up meetings with advisers and students from organizations, and the athletic office to contact a coach.
- \_\_\_ If you are interested, ask if you can stay overnight in a dorm and be paired up with a student who has completed at least one semester at the school.
- \_\_\_ Ask to be sent a campus map and directions, if you can't find them online or in the college's catalog. If you will need overnight accommodations, ask if the person can suggest any places to stay.

### Confirming Your Appointment

- \_\_\_ The week before your appointment, call to confirm.
- \_\_\_ Be sure that you have your list of questions—and your directions—when you leave for your visit.

### After the Interview

- \_\_\_ Write thank-you notes to your interviewer and anyone else you met with formally, such as a coach or a professor.
- \_\_\_ If you spoke with any students and traded e-mail addresses, send an e-mail thank you. If you apply and are accepted to this college or university, this student will be someone you already know when you arrive on campus.

## When You Can't Get to Campus

If cost or time constraints preclude a trip to campus, there are a few ways to "visit" anyway. They can't replace the real thing but can help to broaden your view of a college and promote your child's candidacy.

### Take a Virtual Tour

With Internet access, students can "visit" almost every campus in the country. Hundreds of home pages will link you quickly to photographs, facts, and figures, as well as to other information that can range from course syllabi to cuisine. Look back to Chapter 2 to review some strategies for getting the most out of the World Wide Web without getting lost or tangled.

Some "virtual tours" are even set up to replicate armchair trips to campus. But keep in mind that just as travel brochures won't let you smell the coffee on the Champs-Élysées or feel the warm sand of Waikiki, photos found on typical Web pages can't compete with a real stroll through the library or dining commons. More telling, however, are student publications that can usually also be accessed from the Web. At many institutions, student organizations have their own home pages, too, and these student-designed sites may provide more insight into a school's culture and climate than the official offerings. At [www.collegenews.com](http://www.collegenews.com), you'll find lists of—and direct access to—online college newspapers that will help you get the feel of a campus you don't see.

### Make the Scene by Screen

Most colleges try to show off their best sides via video. Ask each admission office to mail you a copy of its own. High school guidance departments often have a range of tapes available as well. Although celluloid tends to bring out the sameness—not the specialness—of most schools, the video will give a view that even the viewbook can't.

### Let the Campus Come to You

Ask your child's guidance office about area college fairs or college nights attended by representatives from a range of institutions. These vary from large and noisy all-comers occasions to smaller events, limited to students and parents from only one secondary school. Tables piled high with publications and festooned with catchy banners and displays are staffed by admission officials or by local alumni. Don't rely on fairs as a time for your child to really get to know a school nor for the school to know your child. Yet, you might get lucky on a slow night, have lots of questions answered, and allow your child to feel he has made a connection with a particular college. At the very least, a fair is a good time to browse and see what's out there and to get on (yet more) mailing lists. Parents, as well as students, should try to attend and "work the room" from your own unique vantage points. (Hint: Bring stick-on address labels to fairs, and it will save you and your child from writer's cramp.)

Schedules for fairs sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling are listed at [www.nacac.com](http://www.nacac.com). At this same site you can find information about, you guessed it, college fairs online. Yes, lest some Internet opportunity go unexploited, parents and students can "attend" these regularly scheduled events where a virtual visit hall features "exhibits" provided by participating colleges, and campus representatives "chat" live with guests. The cost is free, but whether these sessions are worth the price of admission depends largely on how much you or your child enjoy such e-enterprises. Perhaps for those who live in remote areas, this is the closest you'll ever get to a college fair.

In addition to visiting fairs, representatives from hundreds of institutions make visits to high schools during the day. The guidance office posts schedules in advance, and students may have to be excused from class to attend. Sometimes college representatives speak to a roomful of students; sometimes to only one. These talks are not official interviews and candidates are not judged by their comportment, but they do offer up-close and accessible looks at colleges. Parents should ask guidance counselors for lists of upcoming visitors and encourage their children to attend appropriate sessions. If a top-choice college is on the list, you can call that school's admission office to see if the visiting representative will be attending evening events where parents are welcome. Your high school may also permit interested parents to sit in on school-day sessions (and oh, how your child will love that!).

Some college representatives conduct official interviews while on the road; a few will even do so by phone. Always ask admission offices what your options are.

### Connect with an Alum

As you read earlier in this chapter, colleges commonly utilize a network of their graduates who help with the admission process. These alumni may conduct interviews that are just as official as the ones held on campus (complete with an evaluation sent to the admission office afterwards), or they may provide less structured ways to learn about their former schools. The admission office can give you the names of such alumni in your area. You may be surprised by how widespread—even international—these contacts can be.

Your child will go to the alumnus' or alumna's home or office (or another mutually convenient spot) and should ascertain in advance if this is to be a formal interview and prepare accordingly. Be aware, however, that even when alums are trained to represent the college as interviewers, they are often better at answering general questions about their alma mater than specific admission related queries. Alumni, too, are likely to paint a picture of the school that may be more subjective than factual. Recent graduates *should* have the up-to-date scoop on a range of topics, while other alums may offer enchanting anecdotes about the good old days but could have limited information about the campus that your child will encounter.

Connecting with an alumnus or alumna might also help your child's chances at decision time. Some influential and experienced alumni are eager to promote their favorite local candidates and may even have the ear of top-ranking admission officials.

**Note: The following documentation was obtained from [www.makingitcount.com](http://www.makingitcount.com)**

## **Tough Questions to Ask on Your College Visit**

### **About Academics**

1. What academic elements are considered in the admissions process, for example: courses, grades, test scores, rank, interests, institutional needs, essays, recommendations, and interviews? How important are each of these factors?
2. Which academic programs on campus are the most popular?
3. What are the largest classes you could have as a freshman or sophomore? How many large classes can you expect?
4. Who teaches the freshman classes? Teaching Assistants? Graduate Assistants?
5. (If this applies to you) Are there any special support services if you are a special needs student (ADD, ADHD, LD, etc.)? How do these support services function and is there any additional cost charged for these services?
6. Is there an Honor Code? How does it operate?
7. Is there an Honors Program for talented students? How do you qualify?

### **About Social/Recreational Opportunities**

1. What activities do students participate in during their free time both on campus (school sponsored) and in the community?
2. Does the campus have a Greek system of fraternities and sororities? If so, what percent of the student body participates in Greek life? Are parties open? How do students who elect not to participate in the Greek system fit in?
3. What are the most popular extracurricular activities?
4. Where is there central gathering place for students?
5. What portion of the student body lives on campus? What portion of the student body remains on campus for the weekends?
6. What transportation options are available to and from campus both for trips to the mall and for treks to transportation centers for trips home?
7. Can freshmen have cars on campus? What is the fee for having a car on campus?
8. Is it easy to get around campus? Can you walk to and from campus?

### **About Housing/Food Services**

1. Is campus housing guaranteed for all four years? What percent of students live on campus all four years?
2. What housing options exist? (Honors? Themed? Single sex? Co-ed? Greek?)
3. What meal plans are available? Are freshmen required to purchase a specific type of meal plan?
4. What hours may students access food services?

## About Auxiliary Services

1. Where do students go if they have a medical emergency?
2. What tutoring, counseling, and support services are available on campus and how are they accessed?
3. What computer access will you have? Do you need to bring your own computer? Are the dorms wired for Internet/email services?
4. What laundry facilities are available?
5. What are the safety issues on campus? How are they addressed? Ask for a crime report. Federal law requires schools to provide safety information to students.
6. Are there on-going construction projects around campus? (This is a good thing as it signals good facilities.)

## About Paying For It

1. What is the yearly cost of attendance, including books, tuition, fees, housing and meal plans? In other words, what is the all-inclusive cost?
2. Does your ability to pay for the full cost of attendance have any impact on the college's decision to admit you?
3. Which financial aid forms are required? (The most common two are the FAFSA and the CSS PROFILE, but some schools have institutional or school-specific forms and some states have special forms.)
4. What percent of entering freshmen receive aid? What was the average freshman aid package? Is there a way aid is packaged, loans first, for example? If you are unhappy with your aid package, is it negotiable?
5. If you demonstrate need, will the school be able to prepare a financial aid package that will meet 100% of your demonstrated need?
6. What types of payment plans exist for paying the Estimated Family Contribution?

## CAMPUS VISIT CHECKLIST

Name of College \_\_\_\_\_ Date of visit \_\_\_\_\_

Tour Guide's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Below are some tips that both parents and students can use during a campus visit to learn more about any college campus:

- VISIT the Career Center
- ASK the tough questions until you get answers
- PLAN at least one half day at each school and stay overnight, if possible
- VISIT when the school is in session
- BRING a journal to jot down your impressions
- ARRANGE an interview with an Admissions Counselor
- TAKE a campus tour
- TALK with students and faculty, preferably from a major that interests you
- PICK UP a student newspaper or activities calendar
- ATTEND an extracurricular activity (sports, theatre, etc.)
- CHECK out the dorms, libraries, student union, bookstore, etc.
- EAT a meal on campus
- GET names and business cards of people you meet for future contacts
- SAVE a map of the campus for future reference
- GO to a class or two
- TOUR the community surrounding the campus
- TALK to a student or counselor in the career center
- FIND out about campus activities
- IMAGINE attending this college for 2-4 years