

Answers to Your College Questions

How do I prepare for a college visit?

Posted by [Anna Costaras and Gail Liss](#) on Thursday, 14 February 2013 in [Choosing Colleges](#)

Is there one perfect college or university for you? Perhaps. Most likely, though, there are many schools that could be a great fit. When visiting schools, you'll sense the characteristics that differentiate one school from another.

School visits offer you a chance to sample different schools to determine what suits you best. There are many factors to consider, so here are a few things you should do to ensure that you are well-prepared for your visit:

- **Start with an open mind.** Look at different types of schools (small, medium and large) in various types of settings (urban, suburban, and rural) and with distinct missions (liberal arts, research, professional, or a combination). Even if you think you know what type of school you want to attend, you owe it to yourself to look at what's available. Don't limit yourself!
- **Use available resources.** Check your local library and bookstore for college guidebooks, such as the [Fiske Guide to Colleges](#). Spend time online—explore school websites and review course offerings. Take virtual tours of campuses and browse through online photo galleries. Talk to your parents and guidance counselor. If you discover academic, athletic, and extracurricular programs you'd like to look into, jot down notes—it's easy to confuse details from one school to another.
- **Call a family meeting.** Who's going on the visit? Will you be traveling with your parents and siblings or do you plan to go it alone? Consider turning the college road trip into a family vacation. Younger siblings will love being included and can also benefit from the experience. Look at a calendar and choose dates. Talk about a budget. How far will you travel? Do you plan to stay overnight? Do you need to book a hotel or will you stay with a student on campus?
- **Map out a plan.** Look through school websites and check the admissions page for campus visit dates and schedules for informational sessions and campus tours. Are you interested in attending a basketball game, a campus theater production, or a concert? If so, be sure to purchase tickets ahead of time. If the school offers interviews, schedule yours to fit in with other on-campus events you plan to attend. Remember, it's ideal to visit when classes are in session. Arrange to sit in on a class, eat at the cafeteria, and spend time at the student center. Notice what students are doing and how you feel as you walk through campus.
- **Prepare yourself.** Have questions ready for admissions reps, tour guides, and interviewers. Reach out to any current students you know to ask questions you don't want to ask during an info session. Ask them to walk you through the parts of campus not covered on the tour. Connect with alumni who can also answer your questions and share their personal experiences. Don't forget to review your questions as well as the topics you want to learn more about before arriving on campus.

Preparing for a college visit is like fitting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Laying out the framework and paying attention to detail are necessary for success. Start early and stay organized.

Enjoy the process—exploring the possibilities is so exciting!