

COLLEGE VISIT GUIDE



WHY VISIT?

Deciding which college to go to is a pretty big decision. You will hopefully be spending four years there, making friends, becoming part of a community and building the educational foundation for your future.

The best way to figure out whether you can see yourself as part of a particular school's community is to visit – in person if you have the opportunity – otherwise a virtual visit can provide useful information as well.

ProTip!

Don't Just Tour - Explore!

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

Many schools, but not all, track what is referred to as demonstrated interest and factor this into the admissions process. Essentially, this means that the schools are considering how interested you seem in them. They want to admit students that seriously consider their school, to avoid admitting students who then decide to attend another school.

There are many ways to engage with the school and to demonstrate your interest. This includes campus visits, virtual visits, opening emails from the school, clicking links that the school may share with you, attending virtual events, meeting the college representative if they visit your school or at a college fair.



WHEN TO VISIT

The best time to visit is when classes are in session, so check the college's academic calendar for breaks. If visiting during the school year isn't possible, summer visits can still provide insight into the campus, surroundings, and key information from info sessions. If no students are present, you may need to imagine campus life, but a summer visit is better than none!



PLANNING YOUR VISIT



Colleges typically offer two formal visits per day—morning and afternoon—starting with an information session led by admissions staff. This covers academics, student life, and the admissions process.

A student-led campus tour follows, showcasing key areas like classrooms, libraries, and sometimes dorms and dining halls. Guides share insights on academics, accommodations, and student life, but remember, their perspective is just one view. If you don't connect with your guide, seek out other students for a broader perspective before making judgments.

SCHEDULING

Most colleges offer two formal visits per day, allowing you to visit two schools in a day if they're nearby. During busy times like high school breaks, visits fill up quickly, so it's best to book at least a month in advance through the college's website under the "Visit" or "Admissions" section. Available options will be listed on a calendar. If guided tours are full, self-guided tours are often available through the college website or an app.





BEFORE GOING

Before your visit, research the school online. Explore majors, the mission, and extracurriculars to see if they align with your interests.

If you have a field of study in mind, check the course catalog for exciting classes. Websites like niche.com and unigo.com can also provide student insights.

ARRIVING ON CAMPUS

Upon arrival, go to the location in your confirmation email and check in with staff. They'll provide guidance and a brochure.

For self-guided tours, stop by admissions (if open) to get a campus map, join mailing lists, and ask questions—showing demonstrated interest.



HOW TO GET THE MOST OF THE VISIT



Make sure to take notes during the information session. Jot down any specific information that you find interesting, things you want to remember and any questions that you may want to ask students later if you are going on a guided tour. Don't be afraid to ask questions during the information session as well!



WHAT YOU'LL SEE & HEAR

- Classrooms & Academics: Are classes small and discussion-based or large lectures?
- Technology & Labs: Are they modern and well-equipped?
- Library: Is it a popular study spot? How extensive is the collection?
- Residence Halls: Are they well-maintained? What housing options exist for freshmen?
- Dining Halls: What food options are available? Are dietary needs accommodated? Is it clean?
- Student Center: Is there a sense of community? What's on the bulletin boards?
- Athletic Facilities: Are they shared by all students or mainly for athletes?
- Career Services: How active and accessible is the career center?
- Accessibility & Support Services: What resources are available (peer tutors, writing center, etc.)?

Take notes and photos to help remember details, as schools can start to blend together. These details can also be useful for supplemental essays explaining why you're applying to a particular school.

WHILE ON CAMPUS

If you have the time, try to eat in a cafeteria or dining hall. It gives you a sense of the food and also the opportunity to observe the student population. Are they sitting together, chatting and talking, or are students mostly sitting quietly alone?

Explore the campus and surrounding area—are there coffee shops, stores, or public transportation nearby? Grab a school newspaper for student perspectives.

Talk to students! Ask why they chose the school, what they love, and what they'd change. If you're hesitant, start by asking for directions—it might spark a conversation or show how helpful students are.

AFTER THE VISIT

If you met with an admissions rep or faculty member, send a thank-you note—email is fine, but a handwritten note leaves a lasting impression. Be sure to include your full name and high school, and collect business cards for contact info. Reflect on your visit that same day. Note the positives, negatives, and surprises.

- Can you see yourself at this school? Why or why not?
- Does it change your college list? (e.g., realizing you prefer an urban campus or a flexible curriculum)
- Any other key takeaways?



QUESTIONS ABOUT ADMISSIONS

- What does holistic admission mean in your application review process?
- Do you consider demonstrated interest?
- What is not important in the application process?
- What percentage of the class is filled in the early decision and/or early application rounds?
- Do applicants apply to a specific school or the college/university as a whole?
- How easy is it to switch from one college/school to another?
- Are there specific majors that limit the number of enrolled students?
- How easy is it for students to take classes in a different school and are there any restrictions?
- Are you test optional or test-blind? What percentage of accepted students applied test optional last year?
- What makes you unique and different from other colleges or universities?
- Do admitted students come for pre-orientation earlier in the summer or right before school starts? What does orientation look like?

QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMICS

- How much interaction do students have with your professors?
- What does the core curriculum look like? Are there required classes or does the school have a flexible curriculum?
- Does the school have a required first-year program? If so, what does it entail?
- Who teaches most freshman classes? Graduate students (TAs) or professors?
- Would you say that the academic atmosphere is competitive or collaborative?
- Is it hard to get into the classes you want?
- Is it hard to switch majors? How soon do you have to declare a major?
- What percentage of students double major?
- How easy is it for undergraduate students to do research with a professor?
- Are classes mostly discussion based or lecture based?
- Is it hard to switch between schools (if applicable)?
- Is it common for students to study abroad?



ProTip!

Take Notes & Pics



QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDENT LIFE

- Where do you go when you need a quiet place to study?
- Where do most students study?
- What do students do on the weekends? What did you do last weekend?
- How easy is it to build friendships?
- Are there many activities in the residence halls for incoming freshmen?
- Do students have cars on campus?
- How diverse do you feel that the student body is and in what way?
- Are there different political and religious views represented on campus? What issues do students like to discuss and debate?
- Does religion play a large role on campus?
- How conservative or liberal would you say that the student body is?
- How many of your peers/friends have left the school since you started?
- Which is your favorite dining hall and what is your favorite food offered? Are there options for dietary restrictions, such as vegan, kosher, vegetarian, lactose free, gluten free?
- How important is Greek life on campus?
- What are the most popular student clubs or organizations?
- What are some traditions on campus that students enjoy?
- What percentage of students are involved in athletics of any kind?

Q'S ABOUT ACADEMIC SUPPORT, HEALTH & SAFETY

- Is there a writing skills center and a math skills center on campus? How easy is it to get an appointment?
- Is professional and/or peer tutoring available? For what subjects? How are peer tutors trained?
- What health and counseling services are available? Is there a long wait for appointments?
- What steps have been taken to improve mental health on campus?
- How safe do you feel on campus?
- What is the most serious crime or other incident that happened on campus last year?



Q'S ABOUT LGBTQAI+



ProTip!

Ask Real Questions

- Are there staff or centers that work to directly support LGBTQAI+ students?
- What housing accommodations are available for transgender or gender-nonconforming students?
- Can students be addressed by their preferred gender or gender-neutral pronouns?
- What queer-related courses do you offer? Who teaches them? Are the classes open to all students or are they discipline-specific to students majoring in certain areas?
- What are the LGBTQAI+ organizations on campus and their annual events?
- Can I meet with LGBTQAI+ students, staff, or faculty on your campus?
- What events or programs does your campus sponsor for LGBTQAI+ students?

OTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- What do you enjoy the most about being here?
- What surprised you the most about the school after you started?
- What is the one thing that students complain the most about?
- If you could change one thing about the school, what would it be?
- What other schools did you consider? Why did you decide on this school?
- What type of student do you think would be happy here?
- What type of student do you think would not feel like they belong here?



