

Preparing for a College Campus Visit Know Before You Go

Is your child thinking of visiting colleges? If so, remember that planning ahead is key to getting the most out of campus visits.

For example, if you make this a family trip, plan to give your child a chance to explore the college alone. After all, it's up to your child to decide whether it's a good fit. Below are some more tips.

What's Important to Your Child

Help your child make a list of the most important college characteristics to investigate. Are large lecture halls or intimate classroom settings better? Your child can check out class sizes. Are sororities and fraternities important? Your child can see what the Greek system is like. Is there a particular major your child wants to pursue? Current students or professors in that department are great sources for your child to talk to once on campus.

Your child should put together a list of preferences, take it along on college visits and take notes about each category. That'll make it easier to compare the colleges after coming back home. This [campus visit checklist](#) is a good starting point.

Researching the College

It's important that your child know something about the college before arriving on campus, especially if an admission interview is scheduled. Your child can:

- Review the admission packet, current course catalog and any other materials the college publishes.
- Surf the college website.
- Talk to currently enrolled students or alumni about the college; get their contact information online or from the admission office.
- Get a map of the college and the town it's in.

Your child should also research the college's retention rate — how many freshmen return for sophomore year — as well as finding out how many students who enroll actually graduate, and how long it usually takes them. This is information that reveals a lot about a college.

Scheduling the Trip

You and your child should pick a [time to visit](#) that's convenient and when classes are in session. That way, your child can sit in on a lecture or stay in a residence hall overnight. The best way for a potential applicant to get a good feel for the campus is to be there when classes are in full swing.

Making an Plan

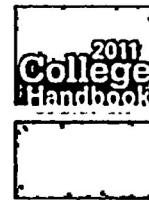
Your child will want to make the most of time on campus. Planning ahead ensures that there's enough time for your child to explore everything on the list. Your child should:

- Find out when college tours and information sessions take place, and whether attendees have to sign up in advance.
- Schedule an admission interview, if possible. Encourage your child to be prepared to ask, as well as answer questions — an interview is a good chance to find out more about a college.

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- Make an appointment with a financial aid officer.
- Arrange to attend a meeting, class or practice of any club, major or sport of particular interest.

Taking Notes and Pictures

Was it X College or Y University that had that terrific science class? Who has the best sports facilities? Where did I talk to that cool psychology professor? Your child may think it'll be simple to remember everything. In fact, it's easy it is to get confused after seeing a few colleges.

Advise your child to record immediate impressions, and any crucial information, for future reference. That means bringing whatever tools are available and useful — cameras, notebooks, laptops. Your child could also take notes on the Campus Visit Score Card.

For more information, check out Campus Visits and College Interviews by Zola Dincin Schneider, which is available in the online store.