

## 8 Tips for a Successful College Visit

By [Allen Grove](#), About.com Guide

College visits are important. Before you commit years of your life and thousands of dollars to a school, be sure you're choosing a place that is a good match for your personality and interests. You can't get the "feel" of a school from any guidebook, so be sure to visit the campus. Below are a few tips for getting the most out of your college visit . . .

### 1. Explore on Your Own



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Of course you should take the official campus tour, but be sure to allow time to poke around on your own. The trained tour guides will show you a school's selling points. But the oldest and prettiest buildings don't give you the entire picture of a college, nor does the one dorm room that was manicured for visitors. Try to walk the extra mile and get the complete picture of the campus.

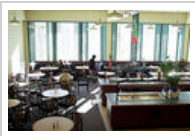
### 2. Read the Bulletin Boards



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When you visit the student center, academic buildings and residence halls, take a few minutes to read the bulletin boards. They provide a quick and easy way to see what's happening on campus. The ads for lectures, clubs, recitals and plays can give you a good sense of the types of activities going on outside of the classrooms.

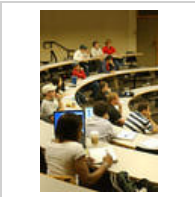
### 3. Eat in the Dining Hall



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You can get a good feel for student life by eating in the dining hall. Try to sit with students if you can, but even if you're with your parents, you can observe the bustling activity around you. Do the students seem happy? stressed? sullen? Also, is the food good? Are there adequate healthy options? Many admissions offices will give prospective students coupons for free meals in the dining halls.

### 4. Visit a Class in Your Major



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If you know what you want to study, a class visit makes a lot of sense. You'll get to observe other students in your field and see how engaged they are in classroom discussion. Try to stay after class for a few minutes and chat with the students to get their impressions of their professors and major. Be sure to call in advance to schedule a classroom visit -- most colleges don't allow visitors to drop in on class unannounced.

### 5. Schedule a Conference With a Professor



Cate Gillon / Getty Images

If you've decided on a possible major, arrange a conference with a professor in that field. This will give you an opportunity to see if the faculty's interests match your own. You can also ask about your major's graduation requirements, undergraduate research opportunities, and class sizes.

### 6. Talk to Lots of Students



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Your campus tour guide has been trained to market the school. Try to hunt down students who aren't getting paid to woo you. These impromptu conversations can often provide you with information about college life that isn't part of the admissions script. Few university officials will tell you if their students spend all weekend drinking or studying, but a group of random students might.

### 7. Sleep Over



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If it's at all possible, spend a night at the college. Most schools encourage overnight visits, and nothing will give you a better sense of student life than a night in a residence hall. Your student host can provide a wealth of information, and you're likely to chat with many other students on the hallway. You'll also get a good sense of the school's personality. What exactly are most of the students doing at 1:30 a.m.?

## 8. Take Pictures and Notes



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If you're comparing several schools, be sure to document your visits. The details may seem distinct at the time of the visit, but by the third or fourth tour, schools will start to blur together in your mind. Don't write down just facts and figures. Try to record your feelings during the visit -- you want to end up at a school that feels like home.

*This About.com page has been optimized for print. To view this page in its original form, please visit: <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/choosingacollege/tp/8-Tips-for-a-Campus-Visit.htm>*

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