
College Visits and Tours

What Should You Look For When Visiting a College?

When visiting schools that you're interested in attending, there are plenty of items to keep in mind as you explore the school that you'll be spending the next four or more years of your life at.

If the school is on your list to visit, it's safe to assume they've already provided you with enough information about the academic program you're planning to get into. But just because it's explained beautifully on paper doesn't mean you shouldn't go check it out for yourself.

Every school you visit will offer some form of tour. You'll get a chance to walk through the dormitories, academic buildings, library, gym, college center and more with a group of other students interested in attending this school as well. The tours are often led by current students who know the answer to almost every reasonable question you could ask on the tour. It's always a great idea to bring a note pad and pen with you as your questions may unfortunately not get answered when they are on your mind.

But what types of questions should you ask and what should you be looking for on your college visit?

If you're planning on living on campus, you'll want to see the size of the rooms and bathrooms, the common areas and study areas, and of course the cafeteria. You should always ask what type of furniture you're allowed to bring, as some schools have restrictions on what you can bring with you. While on campus, you should also have a meal at the cafeteria so you get an idea of what you'll be eating from now on.

As a commuting student, you'll want to visit the parking area and see how it's set up and figure out if there is a shuttle system to bring you to your classes. You'll be spending a little bit of time on campus in between your classes so you should make sure that you'll feel comfortable with the area they have available for you to just relax in.

Regardless of living on campus or not, you'll want to see the rooms that your department's classes will be taught in. Always ask how many students there are in an average classroom so you'll have an idea of the type of interaction you'll receive from your professors. With general purpose buildings, like the library and gym, you'll want to make sure they're well equipped. If you're looking to pick up a sport at college, make sure they have all the necessary equipment and facilities for it. Some colleges actually use local town or high school resources for these needs so you should definitely find out. At the library, ask what type of network they're on for book lending. If you're going to need to do a lot of research, you want a library that has access to major libraries in the area to get you the books you need instead of sending you out to find them.

You're going to be spending a lot of time at this school (if you choose to go there). It's perfectly acceptable to go for more than one tour or call back and ask questions. Get to know your guide and perhaps ask them for their e-mail so if any other questions pop back up you can contact them about it. Don't settle for a school just because it looks good on paper. Your experience and education depend on how you feel about your academic environment.