

Top Tips for College Visits

By [Wendy L. Nelson](#)

College visits are a critical part of narrowing down your kid's college choice. Here are some tips for getting the most out of them.

1. Start early - We started with our first visit the summer after my daughter's sophomore year of high school. Then we continued to schedule visits throughout her junior year. We scheduled Saturday visits when we could so she didn't have to miss any school. School holidays are also a good time for visits. Some colleges will schedule visit days for holidays like Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Presidents Day. Fall or spring breaks are also a good possibility. By the time you get to the senior year of high school, you will be glad you started initial visits early. You will not want to be continuing to explore more college options once your child starts the application process. Typically senior year brings the second or third round of visits - the admitted student days and campus overnight visits.
2. Allow enough time to explore the surrounding community - You don't want to rush to the visit and then rush right back home. It is important to experience the "local flavor." Your child may be spending four years in this community so they need to know if it is some place they want to be. When you are on campus, ask for recommendations on things you should see, good restaurants and where the big shopping areas are. Explore the neighborhoods around the campus. Do they look safe? Are there a lot of places students can walk to or would they need transportation to get around? If there is an area with lots of shops and restaurants, stop and walk around; have lunch or dinner at a restaurant; soak in the atmosphere.
3. Make sure to get detailed directions on where you need to check in on campus - It is easy to get lost on a college campus with streets running every which way or far away parking lots. Ask the Admissions office to send you a campus map if you can't find one on their website. Make sure you know where to enter the campus and what lot to park in before you go. It will save you a whole lot of hassle in getting there free of stress and on time.
4. Dress for a campus tour - The campus tour will be a big part of your visit so make sure you are prepared for the outside weather conditions. Check the forecast for the area before you go so you can plan accordingly - umbrella, mittens or whatever is needed. And always wear comfortable shoes!
5. Accept that your child may not have the same impression about a school that you do. They may love what you hate and hate what you love. Try to keep it in perspective - remember, this will be their experience, not yours. Of course, speak up if you have major concerns about safety, but otherwise, let your child's feedback be the most important.

Wendy Nelson is a first-time college mom who has approached her daughter's college search process using her professional background in Project Management. She hopes to help others through the college choice process by sharing what she has learned. For more helpful information to guide you in your college choice process visit <http://www.mykidscollegechoice.com>.

MAKING A COLLEGE VISIT

- Schedule an appointment with the Admissions Office.
- Fill out a college visit form with the LHS Attendance Office ahead of time.
- Explore the college website ahead of time. Look at available majors, courses within those majors. Make a list of questions to take with you on the visit.
- Once you have the time scheduled with Admissions and a tour scheduled, **contact the department of your possible major for an appointment** to learn more about that program, their requirements and opportunities.
- Students taking Early College courses – Go to your “My VU” account, print an unofficial VU transcript and take this with you along with your high school transcript. When you meet with someone from your area of major, **have them review the college courses** to tell you how they will count toward your college degree.
- Arrange to sit in on a class within your potential major.
- Be sure to tour a dorm and eat in a student dining hall.