

# College Prep

GUIDE



# Take Campus Tours

Choosing where to go to college can be as significant of a decision as deciding what to major in. If you're weighing multiple options, taking a campus tour can help make up your mind.

Before visiting, make a checklist of the most important factors to your decision.

To discover when a university is scheduling visits, check with the college's administration office through their website or by reaching out to an admin via phone or email. You can typically take these tours with a group and gauge how others react or take a more intimate tour on your own to absorb the campus on a personal level.

## CLEAR YOUR AFTERNOON

Since deciding on a school can be a decision that will impact your future, it's crucial to take your time during a tour. Clear your schedule so you aren't in a rush to finish and make sure your guide is available to answer questions during and after the visit.

Take notes throughout your walkthrough, especially when deciding between a few options. You can compare advantages and disadvantages before you make a final decision.



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## WHAT TO EXPECT

While each college may have their own procedure for tours, you should know what you may expect before your visit. The College Board suggests preparing yourself for these common experiences.

**Information session:** An admission representative will

present you with a brief explanation of the campus.

**Tour:** Typically led by current students, they will show you the main parts of the campus and be available for questions.

**Attend a class:** Some colleges will invite you to sit in on a class, giving you a per-

spective on size, learning style and peers.

**Meet a financial aid officer:** These experts can explain the expectations for qualifying for financial assistance if required.

## PREPARE YOURSELF

Before a tour, you should

research the university to help you develop questions you may not think of on the spot. You should prepare with inquiries for both fellow students and staff members.

Check out a map of the campus too, so you're familiar with its layout before your scheduled appointment.

# After the Acceptance Letter

Once you have been accepted to the school you applied for, you have several responsibilities and proactive measures to take before starting.

Take advantage of the months leading up to your first day by tying up loose ends and ensuring your paperwork and finances are ready for the upcoming school year.

This checklist of ideas from The College Board will prepare you for the next steps after being accepted by your dream school.

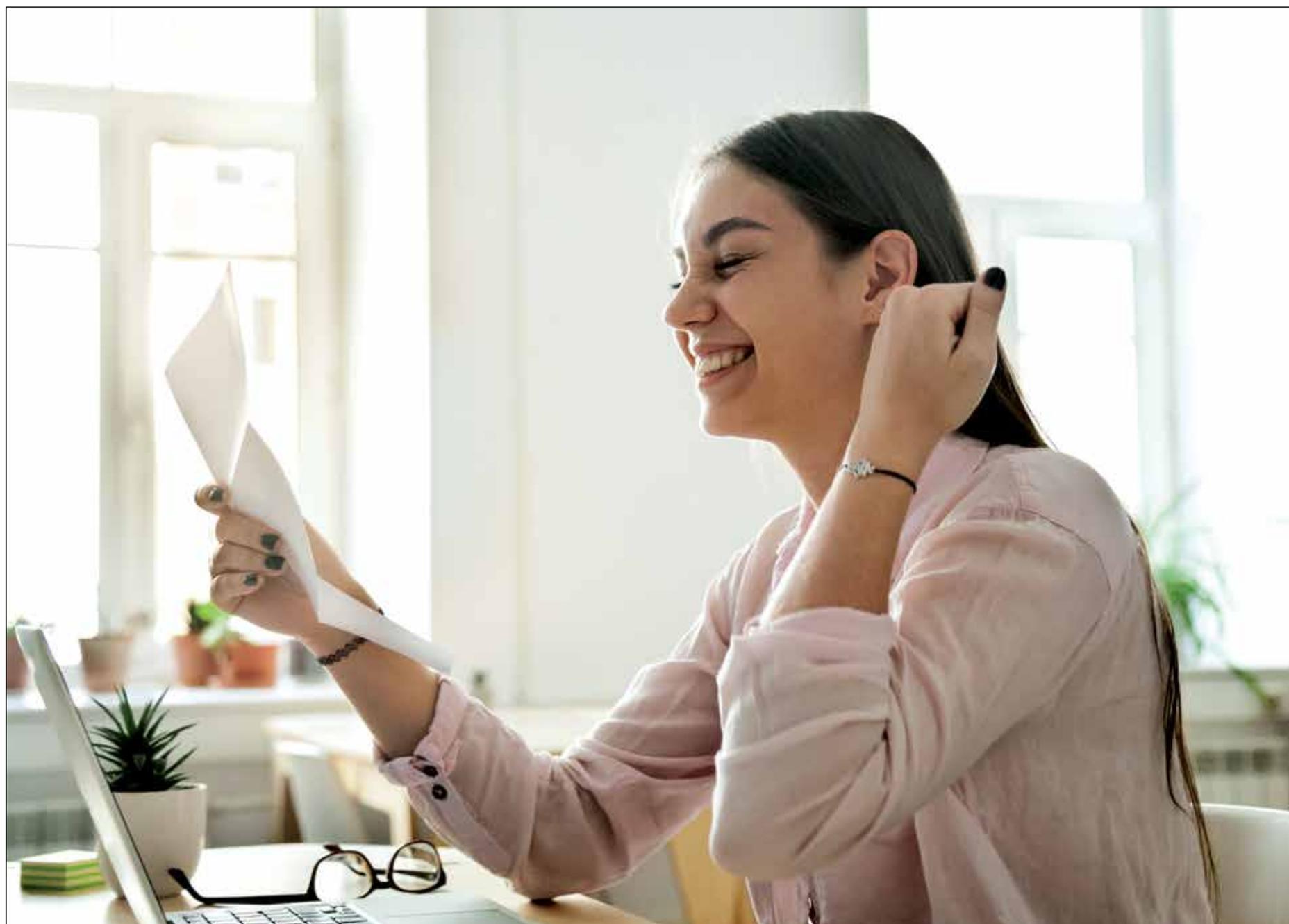
## READ AND RESPOND

You will begin receiving multiple forms and documents from your future school that demand a response. Make sure to check your email often and open all incoming mail. Paperwork may include orientation information, financial-aid requirements and guidelines for housing.

If these important documents are returned after their deadlines, you may find yourself rushing to request an extension or stressed to reschedule.

## TUITION DEPOSIT

Does your college require a tuition deposit? Make sure you pay it before the deadline. If you are unsure about when



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it is due, don't hesitate to contact the admissions office. Being late to pay can cause serious delays and problems.

## CHOOSE HOUSING

If you are leaving home for school, make sure your living arrangements are planned well in advance. Many universities offer dorms for their students to live on campus.

However, if that isn't an option, you may qualify for assistance for off-campus housing.

## PACK

You likely already have a plan in mind regarding the items you will bring along on your new adventure. If you're moving far from home, you should also have a strategy on

how to get it to your new place. Will you hire a moving company or enlist the help of family and friends to execute the move?

You should also consider the type of climate you will be living in. For instance, if you're moving to a region with temperature differences from your current residence, you should plan to purchase a

new wardrobe to remain safe and comfortable.

## CONTACT YOUR ROOMMATE

If your university assigns you a roommate, it's a good idea to reach out before you initially meet. Become familiar with one another and learn their expectations and be clear on your own.

# Sharpen your Technical Skills

Regardless of your major, brushing up on your technical skills provides you advantages before college.

Understanding how to use the required technology will allow you to focus more on learning rather than figuring out how to download content, prepare papers and decipher an email program.

As you prepare yourself for your collegiate adventure, take the steps to brush up on your basic knowledge of tools you will rely on.

## TYPING MASTER

Knowing your way around a keyboard will make it easier when long draft papers are due and navigating the internet for research. Mastering your typing skills can lessen the time you spend on each assignment and allow you to absorb more knowledge rather than being frustrated about how to transcribe it.

You can find ample typing software with a quick search online or take lessons from a professional or friend. As you get started, practice on your accuracy before speed.

## CONSIDER YOUR ONLINE PERSONA

There will come a time where you will reach out to a professor, administration and peers for assignment instructions or campus questions. A



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common type of communication will be email and online forums.

Make sure to use a professional tone and proper grammar as the professionals you contact may be references you rely on during your professional career.

It's also a good idea to keep your social media free from offensive material and negative content.

## RESEARCH REQUIRED SOFTWARE

If possible, ask your college official if a particular software suite is preferred for spreadsheets, papers and presentations.

Take the time to navigate each program to develop an understanding of how they work. A good place to start is in the help menu where there are typically detailed instruc-

tions on features.

Once you are familiar with different techniques, plan to create a mock spreadsheet or presentation to test your capabilities.

## RESOURCEFUL RESEARCH

The internet is a beneficial tool to understand when you're conducting research for an assignment. However,

preparing a credible document or presentation relies on sourcing credible content.

Understanding how to find these resources can speed up the time you spend researching and discovering the material.

Learn the shortcuts available from popular search engines to produce results from government, medical and other official sources.



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# Staying Safe on Campus

Depending on the size of your school, the campus can be a very busy place. The key to safety is being aware of your surroundings and looking out for your peers. Take the time to become aware of your surroundings, both inside and outside the classroom.

The United States Department of Education is committed to providing safe-school environments nationwide. Before heading off to college, obtain a copy of their Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting.

It can be easily downloaded

from their website and offers a perspective of the steps they take to enhance security.

## **BE FAMILIAR WITH THE SAFETY OFFICE**

In addition to the experts on campus who will guide you through your collegiate career,

you should also familiarize yourself with the safety officials. Learn their procedures on addressing concerns and whom you should contact.

It's also important to understand the services that a security team offer. Some universities include options like campus escorts, emergency-phone stations and safety maps to showcase exit strategies.

## **AVOID BEING ALONE AT NIGHT**

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveals there were 28,400 criminal incidents against

persons and properties on campuses in 2016.

One way to protect yourself is to avoid traveling outdoors alone at night. If you find yourself in a situation where you will be navigating outside in the dark, make sure to tell a loved one where you will be or ask friends to take the trip with you.

## **BE DISCREET ABOUT YOUR LOCATION**

It's common for college students to use social media as an outlet for networking and to boast about accomplishments or to share memories.

While it can be a great way to make both friends and professional peers, it's also a way for strangers to know your location.

If you're attending a music festival or an event away from home, avoid posting pictures until you are back home.

If someone with bad intentions realizes your dorm or apartment is vacant, they may be enticed to commit a robbery while you're away.

You also should check your location settings on each social media profile to maintain privacy about where you are.

# Plan to be Involved

Your college career can be enhanced by being active and involved in the extracurricular community. While focusing on your academics should be a top priority, engaging with your peers invites whole memories and professional opportunities.

Before attending college, do your research for interesting clubs to join. You can usually find valuable information on a social media forum with current students or search on a school's website.

Try to find groups where you can contribute toward its growth with your familiarity on the subject. If you are unable to find a club that inspires you, try to start your own. You should meet with school officials to discover their process of creating a new group.

Here are some other fun ways to become involved in the college community.

## **STUDENT WORKER**

A great avenue to take when getting familiar with the student body and how a school operates is by taking a job with the college. Look



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online or on campus advertisements regarding positions that are available.

You may join a sports team as an assistant or maintenance worker or apply to be a teaching assistant. Try to guide you part-time job toward the field in which you are planning to obtain a degree.

This real-life experience can be an incentive on your

resume that hiring managers will appreciate.

## **VOLUNTEER**

Get in touch with your local community and college campus by volunteering your time. Many universities offer positions for students to contribute to the curriculum. Some options to consider are tutoring young children, cleaning up neighborhoods or

helping build homes for charity.

Touch base with school officials to learn how you can help and the benefits you receive from donating your services.

## **ATTEND EVENTS**

A great way to meet new friends and become a part of the campus life is by attending events amongst your

peers. Whether it be a local music festival, a sporting event or a charity drive, you can network with many peers and build lasting relationships.

College-sponsored events are also a much safer alternative than attending parties thrown by students. Remember to stay safe when you are visiting an event with large groups of attendants.

# Applying for Honors College

If you're still debating on schools to apply for, don't forget to consider an honors college.

Many schools offer these specialized programs within their university while others have independent facilities. When applying for this higher-learning opportunity, there are several advantages and disadvantages to weigh.

## WHAT IS AN HONORS COLLEGE?

According to American Honors, an honors education is defined as in-class and extracurricular activities that are more complex than comparable learning experiences typically found at institutions of higher education.

One of the largest differences that students experience is smaller class sizes and a more personal approach when teaching. Rather than attending class in a large, lecture-based setting, attendees are invited to discuss ideas and answer important questions together.

Being invited to an honors program typically requires a stellar grade history, high standardized test scores and an impressive application essay.

With these factors covered, your submission will have a higher chance of landing a prestigious spot in these top-tier programs.



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## ADVANTAGES

An advantage that students gain by attending an honors college that provides housing is being paired with like-minded individuals. Your housemates will likely have similar goals and you can push each other to complete assignments or develop new problem-solving skills.

Oftentimes, the tuition costs for this type of education are

significantly lower than the price of a four-year university. This can mean you have much less student-loan debt after graduation if you don't qualify for financial assistance or lack the funds to pay up front.

Smaller class sizes mean faculty members can spend more one-on-one time with each student. This helps you absorb more information and discuss an issue until you fully

understand it.

## DISADVANTAGES

While there are numerous benefits you can obtain by attending an honors college, there are some disadvantages you should consider.

Since the programs include a small number of students, universities may be more likely to reduce scholarship funding or support if they are faced

with budget cuts.

The workload also is increased over a typical college education. You should expect more homework, deeper research and extra writing tasks. Being enrolled in an honors program is a privilege that requires a serious commitment to your assignments. You may find yourself lacking the extra time to participate in many on-campus activities.

# Finding a Mentor

Balancing your work, education and social life can take a lot of dedication to perform successfully.

It's easy to get distracted and find yourself rushing to complete assignments or finding it difficult to concentrate on your lessons. To keep yourself motivated, find a mentor who can provide you with compassionate guidance to lessen your stress levels.

Finding someone you can trust to be a mentor doesn't have to be difficult. In fact, a potential mentor may already be a large part of your life. Try to network with upperclassmen or even professors for their advice.

Their friendship will not only boost your college experience, but it can have a beneficial impact when you begin applying for jobs after graduation.

## ASKING FOR HELP

The initial conversation with a potential mentor may seem intimidating. It can be difficult to ask someone for friendship and guidance without becoming comfortable with them first.

Instead of being blunt about your desire for their advice, you should be proactive in identifying a person who took a career path like yours and casually explain how you admire their achievements and ask if they would be will-



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ing to engage in a short meeting.

Ideally, they will accept, and you can propose more frequent get-togethers if the meeting is a success.

## MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP

Once you have found a willing mentor, nurturing the relationship is important to maintain it. Be adamant about stay-

ing in touch where you share achievements and concerns.

Over time, you will both become excited to express success stories and push each other to tackle more challenging tasks.

It's important to reciprocate the friendship if your mentor reaches out to you for ideas or problem-solving. Together, you can share a wholesome relationship that lasts a lifetime.

## MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

If finding a mentor proves to be difficult, your university may offer a program where current students are eager to provide their assistance. Check with your career counselors to find out if they have an alumni-mentoring program you can become a part of.

Working with these caring individuals may inspire you to

take a similar approach to offer your friendship to incoming students as you progress through college.

If there is no available program, your school's website will likely offer a database for alumni contact information. You can usually reach out to these graduates through email or a phone call to ask for a minute of their time for a casual conversation.