



# College Visit Kit

 College Guidance Network

# Save time and stay organized with CGN's College Visit Kit. Here's what's included:

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Our top tips for planning and making the most of your visit

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A list of colleges organized by location and size, so you can easily find schools to visit no matter where you're going

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A Google Sheets template that will help you track, organize, and compare all the schools you visit

# Why college visits are important both for you and for the college:

Visiting colleges is a great way to learn about specific schools and also about what you're looking for in your college experience. Make sure to visit schools in every category of your list (likely, target, reach).

Every visit is a worthwhile one. Even if you discover that you don't like the school itself, adding to the list of things you don't want in your college experience is a valuable way to continue finalizing the list of schools to which you will ultimately apply.

Colleges want you to visit so you can learn more about them. Many colleges factor your visit to campus into your demonstration of interest in their school, which can sometimes be a part of your admissions decision.

It's worth taking the time to reflect on your college visit(s). The more you know about a school before you apply, the better able you will be to assemble a compelling application that showcases how you are a good fit for that particular institution.

## Planning your visits

### **1. Make the most of the schools in the area.**

If you have a visit planned already, use our College Clusters list to find other schools to visit in that area. Even if they're not schools you think you'd be interested in, visiting schools where you learn about what you don't want in a school can be just as valuable as visiting schools where you learn what you do want.

### **2. Don't try to visit too many schools in one day.**

Make sure you're only visiting extra schools if you have time. If you pack your schedule too much, you won't like any of the schools you see.

### **3. Consider the time of year.**

Is it the school's spring break or exam week? While it's always helpful to see campus for yourself, it's ideal to plan a visit at a time when classes are in session. That way you can get the best feel for what campus life is like.

Bonus: Also consider if it's a common time for high school breaks. Admissions offices are usually very crowded around these times, so you'll want to make sure to book your visit in advance.

### **4. Explore the school's website ahead of time to learn about all the types of visits they offer.**

Most schools offer tours and information sessions several days a week, but some schools offer class visits or major-specific events that are often only offered at certain times. If those are of interest to you, you'll be able to plan in advance to visit on a day that coincides with those offerings.

### **5. Check for special events.**

Schools will often host open houses or other large-scale events a few times a year. There are often opportunities to speak with professors, learn about student support services, and eat in the dining hall.

## Making the most of your visits

### 1. Check in with the admissions office.

Whether you're attending an official admissions event or not, it's always a good idea to check in at the admissions office. Many schools keep track of visits as demonstrated interest, which can factor into your admissions decision. If you're applying Early to a school, it's incredibly important for the admissions office to know when you're on campus.

### 2. Don't think your tour guide is representative of the entire student body.

Sometimes you'll love your tour guide, and sometimes they'll leave something to be desired. But either way it's dangerous to assume all the students at the school are like your tour guide. Remember they only represent one point of view. For other perspectives you can strike up a conversation with current students you see on the sidewalk or in the dining hall.

### 3. Explore on your own.

Spend time on campus doing activities that are independent of the admissions office and the official tour. You might wish to eat in a dining hall, explore academic buildings, or see the fitness center.

### 4. Try to meet your regional admissions officer.

Your regional admissions officer is often the person who reads your application, so it never hurts to get some face-to-face time with them if your schedules line up.

## What if I don't have the time or money to visit a school in person?

Sometimes it's just not possible to visit a school in person — and that's ok. Virtual visits, high school visits, and college fairs are all great ways to learn more about a school and interact with members of their community.

If money is the primary factor stopping you from visiting a school, reach out to your regional admissions officer. In some instances colleges have funds available for students or an all-expenses-paid visit program you can apply for. It never hurts to ask, and even if a school cannot financially support your visit, at least you will have made a connection with your admissions officer and shown them that you're interested!

# College Clusters

The list below — clusters of universities and colleges — is intended to serve as a starting point for planning trips to visit different campuses.

## NEW ENGLAND

### Boston/Rhode Island Area

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#### Large, Urban Universities:

Boston University  
Northeastern University  
University of Massachusetts (Boston)  
University of Massachusetts (Lowell)  
University of Rhode Island

#### Medium Universities:

Boston College  
Brandeis University  
Brown University (RI)  
Harvard University  
MIT  
Providence College  
Tufts University  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

#### Smaller Colleges:

Babson College  
Emerson College  
Emmanuel College  
Olin College of Engineering  
RISD (Art/Design)  
Simmons College (Women)  
Stonehill College  
Wellesley College (Women)  
Wheaton College Wheelock College

### Maine/NH/VT

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#### Large Universities:

Southern New Hampshire University  
University of Vermont  
University of New Hampshire  
University of Maine  
University of Southern Maine

#### Medium University:

Dartmouth College

#### Small Colleges:

Bates College  
Bowdoin College  
Champlain College  
Colby College  
Middlebury College  
New England College  
St. Michael's College

# College Clusters

## NEW ENGLAND (cont'd)

### Central/Western Massachusetts

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#### Large University:

Univ. of Massachusetts (Amherst)

#### Small Colleges:

Amherst College  
Assumption College  
Clark University  
Hampshire College  
College of the Holy Cross  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
Mount Holyoke College (Women)  
Smith College (Women)  
Williams College

### Connecticut

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#### Large University:

University of Connecticut

#### Medium universities:

Fairfield University  
Sacred Heart University  
Yale University

#### Small Colleges:

Connecticut College  
Trinity College  
Wesleyan University

## MID ATLANTIC

### New York City Area

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#### Large Universities:

New York University

#### Medium universities:

Columbia University  
Fordham University  
Hofstra University  
The New School

#### Small colleges:

Barnard College (Women)  
Eugene Lang College  
Sarah Lawrence College  
The Cooper Union  
Wagner College

# College Clusters

## MID ATLANTIC (cont'd)

### New York State

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#### Large Universities:

Cornell University  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
SUNY System (e.g., Binghamton, Albany, Buffalo)  
Syracuse University

#### Medium Universities:

Ithaca College  
Marist College  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
University of Rochester  
West Point

#### Small Colleges:

Bard College  
Colgate University  
Clarkson University  
Hamilton College  
Hobart & William Smith Colleges  
Skidmore College  
St. Lawrence University  
Union College  
Vassar College

### Philadelphia and Surrounding Area

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#### Large Universities:

University of Delaware  
Drexel University  
University of Pennsylvania  
Rutgers University  
Temple University

#### Medium Universities:

Villanova University

#### Small Colleges:

Bryn Mawr College (women)  
Haverford College  
Swarthmore College  
Ursinus College

### Pennsylvania

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#### Large Universities:

Pennsylvania State  
University of Pittsburgh

#### Medium Universities:

Bucknell University  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Duquesne University  
Lehigh University

#### Small Colleges:

Allegheny College  
Dickinson College  
Franklin & Marshall College  
Gettysburg College  
Lafayette College  
Muhlenberg College  
Susquehanna College



# College Clusters

## MID ATLANTIC (cont'd)

### Washington DC/Baltimore Area

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#### Large Universities:

George Washington University  
University of Delaware  
University of Maryland (College Park)

#### Medium Universities:

American University  
Catholic University  
Georgetown University  
Howard University (Historically Black University)  
Johns Hopkins University  
Loyola University of Maryland  
US Naval Academy

#### Small Colleges:

Goucher College  
Hood College  
St. John's College (Great Books)  
St. Mary's College  
Washington College

## SOUTH

### Virginia/North Carolina/Tennessee

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#### Large Universities:

East Carolina University  
James Madison University  
North Carolina State University  
University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill)  
University of North Carolina (Asheville)  
University of Tennessee  
University of Virginia  
Virginia Tech

#### Medium Universities:

Duke University  
Elon University  
University of Richmond  
Vanderbilt University  
Wake Forest University  
College of William and Mary

#### Small Colleges:

Davidson College  
Guilford College  
Hampden-Sydney College (Men)  
High Point University  
Lynchburg College  
Roanoke College  
Rhodes College  
Washington & Lee University

# College Clusters

## SOUTH (cont'd)

### South/Florida

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#### Large Universities:

Auburn University  
Clemson University  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
University of Florida  
University of Georgia  
University of Kentucky  
University of South Carolina  
University of Tampa

#### Medium Universities:

College of Charleston  
Emory University  
Furman University  
University of Miami  
Tulane University  
Xavier University of LA (Historically Black College)

#### Small Colleges:

Agnes Scott College  
Eckerd College  
Morehouse College (Historically Black College - Men)  
Rollins College  
Sewanee: University of the South  
Spellman (Historically Black College - Women)

## MIDWEST

### Chicago/Michigan/Wisconsin Area

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#### Large Universities:

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
University of Wisconsin  
University of Michigan  
DePaul University

#### Medium Universities:

University of Chicago  
Loyola University of Chicago  
Marquette University  
Northwestern University  
Saint Louis University  
Washington University, St. Louis

#### Small Colleges:

Beloit College (WI)  
Carleton College  
Lake Forest College  
Lawrence University (WI)  
Macalester College  
St. Olaf College

# College Clusters

## MIDWEST (cont'd)

### Ohio

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#### Large Universities:

Bowling Green State University  
Cleveland State University  
Kent State University  
Miami University of Ohio  
Ohio University  
The Ohio State University  
The University of Akron  
The University of Cincinnati  
The University of Toledo

#### Medium University:

Case Western Reserve

#### Small Colleges:

Denison University  
Kenyon College  
Marietta College  
Oberlin College  
Ohio Wesleyan University  
Wittenberg University  
College of Wooster

## SOUTHWEST

### Southwest/Texas

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#### Large Universities:

Baylor University  
Southern Methodist University  
University of Arizona  
University of Texas, Austin  
University of Utah

#### Medium University:

Rice University  
Trinity University (San Antonio)

#### Small College:

St. John's, Santa Fe (Great Book)

### Colorado

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#### Large Universities:

University of Colorado at Boulder  
University of Denver

#### Small College:

Colorado College

# College Clusters

## WEST COAST

### Southern California

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#### Large Universities:

UCs (Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Diego)  
University of Southern California

#### Medium Universities:

Loyola Marymount University  
Pepperdine University  
University of San Diego

#### Small Colleges:

Chapman University  
Claremont Colleges (Claremont McKenna, Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, Pomona & Scripps)  
Occidental College  
Whittier College University of Redlands

### Northern California

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#### Large Universities:

Stanford University  
UCs (Berkeley, Santa Cruz)

#### Medium Universities:

University of San Francisco  
University of the Pacific  
Santa Clara University

#### Small Colleges:

California College of the Arts

### Pacific Northwest

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#### Large Universities:

University of Oregon  
University of Washington

#### Medium Universities:

Seattle University  
Willamette University  
University of Puget Sound

#### Small Colleges:

Lewis & Clark College  
Reed College  
Whitman College

## Questions To Ask On Your College Visit

After identifying a subset of colleges that pique your interest, it's time to formulate a list of questions to ask on campus tours and info sessions.

Ask questions that go beyond what you're likely to learn from a brochure or website (e.g., graduation rates, first-year student retention, percentages of students who live on campus or study abroad, etc.). Included below are 18 general questions, a few of which may resonate with you. This is a guide, so you're free to develop questions of your own. Aim to ask the same questions at every school you visit. This will help you compare colleges and also provide material to write about in your college applications.

1. Why did you choose \_\_\_\_\_?  
What are the most common reasons for students choosing \_\_\_\_\_?
2. How hard do students work here? Are students likely to talk about what they're studying outside of class? How much and where do most people study?
3. How large or small is the typical freshman course? How large or small are your classes? Is it easy to get the classes you want and those that you need for your major?
4. What are the college's general education requirements? What did you take in your freshman year?
5. What is the campus like on weekends? Do most students live and socialize on- or off-campus? Do you have fraternities and sororities on campus and, if so, how much do they influence the overall social scene?
6. How accessible and helpful are your advisors and professors? How did you pick your major? Have you changed your major?
7. What are the most popular majors? Does your major (or do most majors) require an independent study or capstone project?
8. What's the relationship between college students and the surrounding community? How common is it for students to work, volunteer, and/or participate in internships, locally?
9. What can you tell me about the athletic program? How popular are sports? (You may want to ask the same question for other possible areas of interest, such as the performing arts, community service, student government, etc.)

# Questions To Ask On Your College Visit

(cont'd)

10. What percentage of students study abroad? Is study abroad fairly easy to do?
11. What percentage of students completes an internship or takes part in research? Does the college help students secure internship and research opportunities? Does it provide funding or advising?
12. Do students take advantage of campus tutoring programs or the writing center? How much academic support is available?
13. Do you take advantage of your professors' office hours?
14. How visible is your school's alumni association? Do students feel connected to the college's alumni?
15. What do people most love about this college? What would you change about the college?
16. What makes the student body unique? How would you describe the student body? For what is the college best known?
17. Do students enjoy living here? What contributes to the overall quality of life on campus?
18. Is there a sense of school spirit or college pride? What are the main sources?

# College Visit Overview

School Name:

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Location:

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Category:

Likely

Target

Reach

Super Reach

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My Regional Admissions Officer:

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Contact Info for My Regional Admissions Officer:

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Admissions Deadlines:

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Financial Aid Deadlines:

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Merit Scholarship Deadlines:

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What did I learn about this school that feels like a good fit for me and what I am seeking in my college experience?

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What did I learn about this school that does not feel like a good fit for me or what I am seeking in my college experience?

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On a scale of 1 to 10, how good of a fit for you and your goals for college is this school?

NOT A GOOD FIT

FINE FIT

PERFECT FIT

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

# My College Comparison Tool

Use CGN's My College Comparison Tool to help you organize and compare all the schools you visit.

The screenshot shows a Google Sheets spreadsheet titled "CGN's College Comparison Template". The spreadsheet is designed as a form for comparing colleges. The main content area is titled "College 1" and is divided into three main sections:

- Contact Info:** This section is highlighted in purple. It includes a header "Contact Info" and a sub-header "You can find this information on the school's admissions website". Below this are fields for "Website:", "Phone Number:", "Admissions Office Email:", and "My Admission Officer:".
- Basics:** This section is highlighted in yellow. It includes a header "Basics" and a sub-header "Much of this information can be found for any school at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>". Below this are fields for "City, State:", "Rural, Urban, or Suburban:", "Travel Time from Home:", "Public or Private:", "# of Undergraduates:", "Graduation Rate:", and "First-Year Retention Rate:".
- Academics:** This section is highlighted in purple. It includes a header "Academics" and fields for "First Choice Major:", "If applicable, major located in which college/school?", "Second Choice Major:", and "Ease of taking classes outside my major?".

The spreadsheet interface shows a grid with columns A through O and rows 1 through 24. The bottom of the spreadsheet has a navigation bar with tabs for "Instructions", "My College Comparison", "My Deadlines", "College 1", "College 2", "College 3", "College 4", and "College 5".

After you input individual school information to **My College Comparison Tool**, it will automatically create an easy-to-digest comparison sheet. You can see everything in one place, from deadlines to your personal priorities.

**Find the template here** and **select File > Make a Copy** to start creating your personalized college comparison sheet.