



How to Prepare for a College Fair

Attending a College Fair is a great way to do college research. It allows you to meet face-to-face with college representatives. Here are some tips to make the most of your experience:

Before the Fair:

- **Ask yourself “Why do I want to go to college in the first place?”** *This may sound basic, but you’ll be surprised how difficult this question might be for you to answer in the beginning.*
- **Consider what you are looking for in a school**—big/small, major, urban/rural, 2-year/4-year, religiously-affiliated, athletics, Greek life, special programs/opportunities, etc.
- **Make a list of schools that are a “must” to connect with.** *You may not be able to get to every college, so know ahead of time what type of colleges you would be interested in attending.*
- **Register online ahead of time, if applicable.** *Registering will give you a bar code the college rep will be able to scan to get your contact information.*
- **Type your contact info, high school name, graduation year, major, etc. on sticky labels for contact cards.**
- **Talk to at least one college representative from a school you have never heard of.**
- **Prepare a list of interesting, specific questions for the college reps**—*this will generate interesting and specific conversations.*
- **Make a professional email address.**

During the Fair:

- **Bring a pen, paper, and tote bag** for notes and materials.
- **Grab a map** (if available) to plan your route.
- **Be patient**—you may have to wait in line to talk to a college.
- **Don’t let your parents do all of the talking.**
- **Take notes!** *Write down what you find most interesting about each college.*
- **Ask for business cards.** *Follow up with the rep if you have more questions or just want to thank them for their time.*
- **Be adventurous!** *Chat with colleges you may not have considered or never heard of.*
- **Attend an information session** to learn more about the college search process, financial aid, and other topics.
- **Drop by the Counselor table** to meet one-on-one with a College Counselor.

After the Fair:

- **Organize and sort through all of the material** you have collected.
- **Make notes about schools that stood out to you** while it is fresh in your mind.
- **Recycle materials** from colleges you have ruled out.
- **Review college websites, catalogs, and view books** of the schools that interested you most. *This will help you narrow your choices.*
- **Write down any additional questions** you want to follow up about.

- **Consider sending a thank you email to the college representative.** *This simple gesture can show admission officials you are serious about wanting to attend their college.*
- **Talk to your parents and counselor** *about what schools peaked your interest and why.*
- **Adjust your college list accordingly,** *if necessary.*
- **Start scheduling visits** *to your top schools.*
- **Read e-mails** *to see when colleges will be visiting your school or community.*

What Can Parents Do:

- **Encourage your students to research** *the schools ahead of time and truly evaluate what they want out of their college experience.*
- **Attend the information sessions** *on the college search process, financial aid, and other topics.*
- **Encourage your student to begin the exploration process EARLY.** *Be ready to discuss post high school options, including finances.*

College fairs are a great resource when you are doing your college search. Plan ahead and get the most out of your experience. Enjoy!

QUESTION DO'S & DON'TS

DON'T ask:

- What is your freshmen acceptance rate?
- What's the average GPA of students accepted?
- How cold does it get in the winter?
- What's the student-to-faculty ratio?
- What's your school like? (Too general)
- "Is your _____ program good? (Of course it is!)"

These are all things you can research easily online.

Do ask:

- What are the 3 coolest things about your school?
- Where do you like to eat on campus?
- How easy is it to take classes in _____ if I'm a _____major?
- What are 3 adjectives to describe the type of students at your school?
- What is your favorite tradition at your college?
- Out-of-state colleges: What programs are offered to help out-of-state students adjust living away from home?
- If the rep is an alum: What do you wish you would have taken advantage of at your college?
- What do students like to do on the weekends at your school or in the area?