

**COLLEGE
PLANNING
TIPS
FOR
JUNIORS**

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Art of the Campus Visit

BEFORE THE VISIT:

- Call the admissions office in advance to arrange a visit. Ask about lining up interviews, attending an information session, sitting in on a class, talking with professors, and setting up overnight visits when appropriate.
- Go back through the college's information folder, or begin to compile information from the college's Web site. Write down questions that come to mind.
- For an on-campus interview, be prepared to answer questions about your academic background, interests, hobbies, goals and why you're interested in the college.

ON CAMPUS:

- Pick up copies of the student newspaper, alumni magazine and other publications.
- Refer to your list of questions when meeting with students, professors and admissions representatives.
- Take advantage of campus tours, but also explore the campus on your own. Eat a meal in the cafeteria. Sit in on a class.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ADMISSIONS REPRESENTATIVES:

- Does the college have academic programs that fit my interests?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college's advising system?
- What kinds of campus jobs are available for first-year students?
- Will there be any new programs or facilities in the next two years?
- What are the college's recent graduates doing now?
- Questions to ask college students on campus:
- How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical here?
- Do many students visit home on weekends?
- Are faculty members interested in students and accessible outside of class?
- Are the athletic facilities open to all students?
- Is there easy access to computers?
- How easy is it to get into the classes that you want?
- What do you like most about the college? Like the least?
- If you could change something about the college, what would it be?

AFTER YOU VISIT:

- Write down your impressions.
- Were the people you met friendly? Did they answer your questions fully and candidly?

- What did you think of the quality of instruction and academic atmosphere?
- If you visited a class, did you feel the students were learning? Did students participate, with time for questions and discussion?
- Were you intellectually challenged by what was happening in class? Was there a good rapport between instructor and students?
- Were the students the kind of people you'd like to get to know?
- Did you like the social atmosphere?
- Were the buildings in good repair and the grounds well maintained?
- Are the residence halls pleasant and quiet enough for studying? Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
- What's the cafeteria like?
- Are computers and lab equipment up to date and plentiful?
- What's the surrounding community like?
- Would you like to spend more time there?

from <http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080302/APC04/803020553/1029>
- Appleton Post-Crescent)

The College Interview

Nearly every interview guide will tell you to:

- Choose modest, undistracting clothes that resemble 'business casual'.
- Be early, so that you're relaxed when the interview starts.
- Be yourself. It's much easier.

But there's more to being prepared. You should also:

1. When you have an appointment arranged, particularly if an alumnus/a is interviewing you in your hometown, be sure to write down the location of your meeting and his/her name and telephone number, in case of an emergency.
2. **Offer to send your resume ahead.** You and your interviewer will be more engaged if you both have an outline of what to talk about.
3. **Outline your answers** to the most likely questions ahead of time. Don't memorize a script; just be ready with the facts at hand.

4. **Think out your questions ahead of time;** it's your chance to find out about the college as well as their chance to find out about you.
5. **Get some exercise before the interview.** You'll fidget less, seem less nervous and more composed. One actor's trick is to stretch your calves and quads before something like an interview. A more relaxed stride makes people look more "grounded".
6. **Bring a bottle of water.** If you're ever stuck on how to answer a question, take a drink. It will minimize any awkward pause. And you might get thirsty.
7. **Know your test scores and GPA!** Don't try to hide information like low scores or grades if you are asked. Explain any discrepancies.
8. **BRING A RESUME.** It will lead the interviewer and allow the interviewer to focus on you and not on organizing his/her notes.
9. **Talk in the future tense.** There will be lots of qualified candidates with folders like yours. Give a vivid picture of what you will contribute to class discussions, campus life and the community at that college.
10. If your parents drive you or come with you, they should be in another room. YOU are the only person who could attend that college.
11. **You may be nervous. It's OK to say so.** Gesture or emphasize your remarks as you would in a classroom; avoid flamboyant mannerisms or squirming in your chair. Try to maintain good eye contact, shake hands firmly (those older alumnae/alumni know that, traditionally, a younger person extends his/her hand to an older one first) and stay relaxed.

What Questions Will I be Asked?

Much as they seem to vary, all good admissions interviews have a common structure with core questions. They start with easy questions intended to put you at ease. Then they'll move through your past academics and activities, to your current interests, to your plans for college. Individual interviewers may digress from this format but it's pretty standard.

Two of the keys to interviewing successfully is to know what you want to communicate about yourself and be sure you pace yourself to get it all in. As a guide, we have presented here that standard interview format with the rough time allocations for each section in a typical one-hour interview. Remember, it's your job to get your points across in the time you have. Be prepared.

Standard Interview Questions: (20 – 25 minutes)

Assume you'll be asked at least 3 of:

1. Why are you applying to *This College*?
 - a. For the unique aspects of the school (small seminars, its location, its history, etc.)
 - b. If you've been there, point that out.
2. What's your favorite subject?
3. What will you major in?
 - a. How did you develop that interest?
 - b. Cite your summer and work experiences
4. What books have you read lately?
 - a. Lead with books not assigned in class.

5. Of those books (or all books) what's your favorite? Why?
 - a. Some points are earned for mentioning a book not assigned in class.
6. What extracurricular activity means the most to you?
7. What do you do for fun?

College-Specific Questions (15-20 minutes)

Assume you'll be asked 3 of:

1. What's your impression of *This College* campus?
 - a. Answer should include comparisons to your experiences on other campuses.
 - b. Address how you feel about the social atmosphere or atmospherics at *This College*
2. Are you aware that *This College* has an extensive core curriculum requirement?
3. Do you follow *This College* sports?
4. How do you feel about the campus culture of *This College*?
 - a. Could be framed as: How do you feel about our unique course requirements?
 - i. Don't act in a way that could be interpreted as surprise at question or the underlying facts.
 - ii. If honest, the best response will be one that frames them as an asset.
 - iii. The ideal response reflects some knowledge of *This College* and its roots.
6. Where else are you applying?

7. Who else do you know that went to *This College*?

The Future (10-15 minutes)

Assume you'll be asked 2 of:

1. What specific skills do you bring to *This College* and to campus life there?
2. What do you plan to do after graduation?
3. Do you plan to go to graduate school?
4. Will you go right into [something] after graduation?

What Questions Could I be Asked?

In theory, you could be asked any legal question that bears upon an admissions decision. With well-meaning well-alumni interviewers, you might be asked **any** question. It pays to be aware of the more common variations of obscure questions that come up from time to time.

Again, don't try to script an answer and commit it to memory. Do be sure that you can handle the question in a relaxed, confident manner. Then move on to one of the important points you want to make about your potential to contribute to campus life.

Your Academic Record

1. Why did you pick the elective courses (or IB program or AP classes, etc.) you chose in high school?
2. How do you describe yourself?

3. What are the best and worst parts of *Your HS*?
4. How do your classmates at *Your HS* describe you?
 - a. Answering this question has some additional risks of misinterpretation. Be positive

This College-Specific Questions

1. Where would you go if you don't get into *This College*?
 - a. May be framed as: Why do you want to go this region for college?
2. Anyone in your family go to *This College*?

The Future

1. Where do you see yourself 5 years after graduation?
2. What kind of career path do you see yourself taking?
3. Do you think you'll go to law school?

What Questions Should I Ask?

For many interviewers, this is the most important part of the interview. For them, the questions you ask indicate the degree of seriousness with which you're approaching the interviewer's college and the college decision generally. Hence, the quality of thought you put into the questions you ask can be key

So, be thoughtful.

Avoid questions answered on the college's website. If your interviewer is an admissions officer, student or a recent grad, focus on learning about the best professors and other academic resources, current events and the direction in which they see the campus moving. If your alumni interviewer is a graduate of more than 10 years or so, get his/her judgments on how the college is evolving and how he/she and other alumni generally feel about the school.

Within that framework, there are valuable things to know about many campuses. These interviews can be the best place to get thoughtful answers from someone who knows you, even a little.

For most colleges, those questions include:

1. How large are typical freshman courses?
2. How difficult is it to get into upper-level courses as a freshman?
3. I am considering majoring in _____. How large are its freshman and upper-class courses?
4. Is there opportunity for independent study or advanced research within most majors?
5. What kinds of internship (or study abroad) experiences would be possible if I majored in _____?
6. How many students from last year's senior class went on to graduate or professional schools?
7. Does this college give credit for courses taken on other campuses? Does this college accept credit from only those campuses abroad where it has its own programs?
8. _____ is my first choice housing option. What chance do I have getting it as a first-year? How many upperclassmen live off campus?
9. How many students are typically housed per room? Are singles available? How old are the dorms?
10. If there are fraternities or sororities on campus: How do these organizations

contribute to campus life?

11. I play _____. How actively could I become involved on your campus? At the intercollegiate level? In intramurals?
12. Is it possible for me to continue my (musical instrument) lessons on a private basis? Through your music department?
13. Off-campus, what cultural or recreational opportunities are available in the area?
14. What is the social and political atmosphere of the surrounding community? Do students ever become involved in town life? Are there opportunities for service?
15. Can you characterize the personality or atmosphere of *This College* as you see it?
 - a. What kind of student is happy here? And what kind is not happy?
16. What kind of freshman orientation program is offered? How long is it and when does it occur? What activities take place?
17. How is the advising system set up for freshmen and who does the advising?
18. What are some of the best features of *This College*?
19. What are some of the challenges and even weaknesses of *This College*?
 - a. Are there opportunities for students to work on that?

How do Selective Colleges use the Interview?

Each college that interviews you:

- Invests resources, and alumni are a very important resource, to gather insights that will allow the admissions staff to distinguish among qualified candidates.

- Will use the results of the interview. Generally, the more qualified applicants an admissions office has to evaluate, the more important a role the interview report can play.
- Is telling you some important information about the culture of the school and what they value in the admissions process.
- Is also telling you they want to know how *accessible* your knowledge, skills and character will be to the rest of college community.
- Is making an effort to get a person committed to the admissions process to meet you. This can be a very valuable source of personalized information about the college and campus life.
- Wants the interview to go well. They want to get the best possible information about you and your potential to contribute on campus

Georgetown's Approach:

"The interview is an opportunity for applicants to express themselves to the admissions committee. Interviewers are not looking for any specific information about the applicant; rather they seek to have a general conversation about the applicant's thoughts and interests. Each interview will be unique based on the interviewer and the applicant, but some topics that may come up include: academic interests, extracurricular activities, summer experiences, family background, future plans, and exposure to Georgetown. ...

In addition, students should view the interview as an opportunity to express anything they think important the admissions committee know about them that they did not fully articulate in the application. Finally, students should use the interview to learn more about Georgetown and the Georgetown community from the perspective of an alumnus. An interview report will be submitted and becomes part of the admissions file. While the interview report is used as part of the admissions committee's consideration process, it rarely "makes or breaks" an application, and much more often than not it works in the applicant's favor."

Who conducts the interview?

"The Alumni Admissions Program (AAP) is a volunteer network of over 4,000 Georgetown alumni who interview all undergraduate applicants around the world. The AAP is divided into over 200 regional committees and has been

interviewing students for over 35 years. AAP interviewers may be alumni of any school at Georgetown, graduate or undergraduate, and they range in experience from the most recent graduates to alumni of the 1950's. They are a dedicated group who are there to help the admissions committee learn more about Georgetown's applicants as individuals."

From the Georgetown University Admissions website

Brown's Approach:

"Personal attention is BASC's [BASC is the Brown Alumni Schools Committee] chief contribution to Brown's overall student recruitment efforts. Your role is to be the face of the University, providing a personal touch for what may seem to the applicants to be a large institution.

Make the interview as comfortable and convenient for the applicant as possible. Many applicants are understandably nervous about the interview. Start out the interview with easy questions about their high school and their extracurricular activities. Do not ask them about their class rank, SAT scores, or GPAs, as these questions often make the students uneasy and give the wrong impression about Brown. Also, do not discuss the candidate's chances of admission or criticize other colleges.

Explain to the applicants that the interview is not a deciding factor in their application; there is very little they might do or say that would guarantee a denial. Instead, this is a chance for them to find out more about Brown University. Choosing the right college is an enormous decision, and this interview should help students feel more confident about making choices."

From Brown University Admissions website

EVALUATING A COLLEGE

Name of College: _____ Date Visited: _____
Special Circumstances Affecting the Visit: _____
Names of People to Remember (tour guide, professor, interviewer, etc.): _____

What is distinctive about this school? What is it promoting about itself? What is it most proud of?

Comments on the academic programs (strong majors, popular classes, classes that I would love), including any special programs (engineering, architecture, dance, etc.):

Core requirements and their appeal for me (foreign language, math, science)? What about double majors? Pre-med advising? Etc?

Comments on the appeal of the physical campus (buildings, grounds, surroundings, dorms, facilities for art, athletics, etc.):

Comments about the students (tour guide, friends from my school, others I met). Are they happy? Are they academically motivated? Are they a good match for me? Are there students like me here? Would I fit in?

Comments on the quality of life (food, rooms, activities, level of happiness, variety of social outlets and opportunities). Does the surrounding town/city offer additional opportunities that students take advantage of?

Comments on the quality of the extracurricular programs in my areas of interest:

Comments on the quality of career counseling. Does the school help students find internships and jobs? Where do graduates go?

What did I learn about the relationships between faculty and students, among students, between students and administrators? Do people talk about tension, recent changes, problems?

Do I think I can get in? Where do I fit in the school's profile?

My general impressions (both positive and negative):

THE TOP TEN THINGS FOR PARENTS NOT TO DO DURING A COLLEGE TOUR / INTERVIEW / VISIT

1. DO NOT use the royal “we.”

That "we" pronoun is a pretty clear indicator that the student isn't really the one running the search!

Dead giveaways:

“We are very excited about your school”

“We don’t know what kind of major we are interested in yet”

“We would like to know...”

2. DO NOT take calls or use your Blackberries, IPODs, etc.

a. Do not take a phone call during an information session and/or campus tour. For one hour, disconnect.

b. Do not sit in an information session and do business on your Blackberry.

3. DO NOT speak for your student.

a. Do not sign in for your student in the Admissions Office. The student should do it.

b. Do not speak for the student (at registration tables, reception desks, Q/A moments, etc.) while the child stands mutely aside.

4. DO NOT embarrass your child publicly.

a. It's annoying to have a parent preface her question with the advanced curriculum courses her child has already completed. Do NOT go on and on about the student's (real or imagined) strengths and accomplishments.

b. Consistently, the parental question that brings the greatest cringe from the child and the most mush-mouthing from the tour guide has to do with coed bathrooms. What no one has the courage to say directly to Mom (never Dad) is, Get over it! Somehow it all works out and life goes on.

c. Do NOT dominate an information session with a slew of questions; most admissions officers would be happy to answer very specific questions from a family outside of the session time. Plus, it tends to embarrass the kid.

d. Do NOT tell the admission counselor how much brighter/higher achieving/more talented/etc. the student's older siblings were! I continue

to be amazed at how many parents do this. It is awful to sit and watch a student shrink in his/her chair right before my eyes!

- e. DO NOT come to the visit or even schedule a visit with a list of demands. It's okay to request to see a coach, faculty member, etc...most schools will do their best to accommodate, but please understand that faculty and coaches are typically busy teaching and coaching and may not be available (or even allowed- NCAA regulations) when you are on campus.
- f. Do NOT burst into tears and moan 'Oh where did my baby go?' during the tour.

5. DO NOT monopolize the conversation/tour/discussion session.

- a. I would encourage parents to not monopolize the tour guide with specific questions only pertinent to their child's situation. Being interested in and asking a few questions is great, but if they take over a group tour with questions that are specific to only their child, the whole tour will take forever. Those kinds of questions should be asked of a counselor at a later date.
- b. Do not dominate discussions by waxing reminiscent about your good-old college days....

6. DO NOT ruin the interview.

- a. Do not go into the interview with your student to the Admissions Counselor/Officer.
- b. Do not go into an interview with the coach, unless you are invited in, or unless you just plan to listen. This is your student's time to find out about the program, by asking appropriate questions, not yours. Some coaches now think that if they have an overbearing parent during the process, they are thinking "Maybe I don't want this parent around for the next four years," even if they were initially interested in recruiting the student.

7. DO NOT whine, complain or be negative in public.

- a. Do NOT say anything negative during the tour or the info. session. Wait until you are in the car. Personally, I don't think parents should say much of anything about a college visit. I think they should keep their opinions to themselves and let the student form an opinion. If they speak negatively about a school, a student might dig his/her heels and in say he/she is interested in the college, even if he/she initially was not interested.
- b. Do not complain about the lack of 5 star hotels in the region.

- c. Do not challenge the admissions representative about the number of students going to medical school and law school by calling him a liar and telling him that he is clearly misinformed.

8. DO NOT broker your student.

- a. If the student is a legacy or has a family member (however distant) that has donated lots of money to the college, please do not harp on this to any university official. Parents who mention such things make it sound like, "you'd better admit my kid" kind of thing. The student can mention his/her legacy status only in the course of a conversation, or if asked outright, but not as an opener. Just know that the college will certainly know their legacy status once he/she applies.

9. DO NOT allow your child to embarrass him/herself.

- a. Remind your child about appropriate behavior and dress when on campus. Remember that the tour and discussion session are important pieces of the process and ones where behaviors can distinguish oneself, positively and negatively.
- b. Don't allow your progeny to curl up in mom or dad's lap and fall asleep smack-dab in the middle of an information session.
- c. Remind him/her to take off sunglasses and/or hat when inside talking with admission officers, students, faculty, etc.
- d. Remind your child to turn his/her cell phone off.
- e. Remind your child to do his/her "college homework" before the campus visit. He SHOULD NOT ask questions that have already been answered in the info. session nor should he ask questions about information that is readily available on the college's web site.

10. DO NOT plan to do the application process for your child.

- a. I had one mother talk about how great the essay she wrote was!
- b. Parents SHOULD NOT turn in their own letter of recommendation

Practicing For Your College Essays

by Steven R. Antonoff

Introduction and instructions:

--Writing your college essays (more accurately called personal statements) will be the most time consuming part of the process of completing college applications. Doing some draft essays will be helpful in getting an idea of what is expected, thinking about how you will present yourself, and completing paragraphs that you may be able to use for your actual applications.

--Choose one or more of the questions below to write about. Start by focusing on the Primary Questions.

--For each topic you choose, do a draft essay of between 300 and 400 words. Don't worry too much about grammar, spelling, or the technical aspects of your writing. Concentrate on your ideas.

--You can use the format/style you learned in English class or you can establish your own style. Remember that your essay needs to reflect who you are, what you think of things, what you are like.

Primary Questions

1. Describe an interesting experience or achievement that has special significance for you or that has deeply affected you.
2. Write about a personal trait, interest, or hobby.
3. Write about a change you have gone through and how it may affect your future.
4. What do you see as the turning point(s) or important event(s) in your life and why do you view them as such?
5. Discuss specific information about yourself that you deem relevant to college admission but is not conveyed by a transcript or activity chart. (This could include your beliefs, values, or opinions.)

6. 6. Have your experiences as a teenager significantly differed from those of your friends or your parents at your age? Explain how and include comparisons.
7. Explain why one of the best days of your life has had continuing importance to you as a young adult.
8. 8. Coping with a serious problem or challenge may help to establish a person's true moral or ethical character. Have you faced such a situation? What was the outcome?
9. Please let us know something about you that we might not learn from the rest of your application. In the past, applicants have used this space in a great variety of ways. They have written about family situations, ethnicity or culture, school or community events to which they have had strong reactions, people who have influenced them, significant experiences, intellectual interests, personal aspirations, or—more generally—topics that spring from the life of the imagination. There is no "correct" way to respond to the essay request. In writing about something that matters to you, you will convey to us a sense of yourself.

Other Questions:

- A. How do you incorporate fun into your schedule?
- B. B. Describe a significant childhood experience and explain its continuing importance to you as a young adult.
- C. C. Jot a note to your future college roommate telling a personal anecdote that reveals something about you.
- D. If you could spend a day as a fictional character, who would it be and why?
- E. Which of your possessions reveals the most about your character and why?
- F. What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
- G. G. Describe the educational experience—formal or informal—that has had the most significant impact on your life.
- H. H. Describe a situation in which your values or beliefs were questioned by someone you respect. How was the issue resolved?
- I. I. Is there a notable person who, in your opinion, has not received the historical or public acknowledgment s/he deserves? If so, describe that person and his/her achievements, along with your argument for granting the person greater recognition.

- J. If you were able to change one thing about your community or country, what would you change?
- K. Describe an experience that has resulted in knowledge of a culture other than your own. Write about how the experience has affected you.
- L. If we were to look through a collection of your favorite music, art, or books, what would we learn that would add to your candidacy?

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Suggestions For Essay Writing

Pamela Stawasz, Associate Director of Alumni and Parent Programs, Amherst College, provides the following suggestions for students in completing essays. (I've edited the ideas I thought were best.) They are from an essay writing workshop she ran with some colleagues a few years ago. (Her notes first appeared on the NACAC listserv, 9/14/04.)

What we look for in an essay (in general)

- Sophisticated writing
- Cogent communication
- Passion
- Content
- Answer the question!

Landmines - Things to Avoid!

- The "I" essay
- It's/its; their/there/they're; etc.
- Trite phrases or words: myriad, plethora, broaden your horizons, etc.
- Using larger words that don't fit/inappropriate
- Risks (we spoke about these and used examples from some essays where writing about these topics worked well, but warned students of the inherent risks)
 - Profanity
 - Drugs
 - Describing inappropriate behavior

- Boyfriend/girlfriend
- Shock value
- Sympathy
- Travel/community service ("those poor people") - not a warning to not write about these trips, just to be careful about tone when doing so
- Humor (if you're not naturally funny, don't try to start now!; some humor good but too much can be bad)
- Writing about depression or other mental health issues
- Writing about religion
- Poetry

--Do not rely on spellcheck

--Online applications - don't treat informally like an e-mail; still take care in crafting responses and looking for errors

--Essay writing websites (Be careful. Some essays available on the web, while new to you, are common to admission officers.)

Recipe for the College Essay...

- 3 parts thinking to one part writing
- Write about something you care about (demonstrate passion and intellectual curiosity)
- Be focused and provide detail rather than choosing too broad a topic and not getting specific enough (don't try to solve the world in 500 words)
- Attention to detail--avoid the landmines we articulated and other careless errors such as spelling and grammatical errors, writing in different colored pens on the same application, having your parent or someone else fill out part and you fill out another (different handwriting). No sloppy applications!
- Keep in mind your audience - 23 - 65 years olds with diverse backgrounds
- Read your essay out loud.
- Have two people review your essays but not more than that. Edit but don't over edit.
- When having someone read your essay recreate the situation will essay will face--have someone read it in about 2 minutes and then take it away. Ask them what you wrote about (to see if you are clearly getting your point across).

A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT SUMMER VACATION

Summer vacation is a time to . . .

- Explore your interests and acquire new skills
- Travel
- Get a REAL job or internship
- Volunteer
- Try new activities that you don't have time for during the school year
- Visit college campuses
- Spend time with your family
- Read
- Relax

How to choose your summer activities . . .

- Choose a program(s) that is a good match for your needs and interests
- Things to consider
 1. Location
 2. Cost
 3. Time commitment
 4. Depth of experience
 5. Safety

Never choose a program only because you think it will look good on your resume or impress a college admissions committee. They need to know who you are, not who you pretend to be.*

Resources and Possibilities . . .

- Consider AHS-related/sponsored programs (e.g. International Service Club, Sister Cities Exchange programs, etc.)
- Peruse the list of Roaring Fork Valley non-profit organizations for summer programs, and job and internship opportunities [located on the AHS College Counseling web pages].
- Consult books and the web for summer programs.
 - *Peterson's Summer Opportunities for Kids & Teenagers*
 - *The 500 Best Ways for Teens to Spend the Summer*
 - *Guide to Summer Camps and Summer Schools An Objective, Comparative Reference Source for Residential Summer Programs*
 - *Yale Daily News Guide to Summer Programs.*
 - *The Ultimate Guide to Summer Opportunities for Teens.* Sandra L. Berger.
- Research programs about which you receive information and invitations.

* from *The Ultimate Guide to Summer Opportunities for Teens* by Sandra L. Berger

Selecting Summer Programs

What are your summer plans? If all you have is a vague notion of sunning yourself by the pool, you may be selling yourself short. Colleges and other organizations offer a variety of summer programs just for teenagers. Now is the time to think about whether you're interested in participating in a summer program.

Lots of options

"The high school years are years that students should be exploring many different options," says Sheredian Vickers, college counselor at The Woodlands High School (TX). "There are summer camps, employment opportunities, travel opportunities, and many other ways that students can develop the leadership, responsibility, cultural awareness, and maturity that they need."

The first step in selecting a summer program is finding out what's available to you. Visit your high school guidance office or public library to find information on summer programs for students. If you don't have a particular type of program in mind, check out a general guidebook to summer programs, such as:

- *Peterson's Summer Opportunities for Kids & Teenagers*
- *The 500 Best Ways for Teens to Spend the Summer*
- *Guide to Summer Camps and Summer Schools : An Objective, Comparative Reference Source for Residential Summer Programs*
- *Yale Daily News Guide to Summer Programs.*

You can also find directories geared toward particular types of programs, such as travel abroad, internships, or visual and performing arts programs.

Counting the costs

Some summer programs are relatively affordable, but others may be pricey. It's a good idea to talk with your parents about what you can afford. If a three-month trip abroad is too much for the family budget, look into shorter programs or opportunities closer to home. Shorter programs also give you the chance to get a job for part of the summer, which could help pay for the program.

Types of programs

Like choosing a college, deciding on a summer program depends on your interests and talents. A musician may want to hone her skills at a music-oriented program. An athlete might jump at the chance to attend a sports camp. Or you may want to try something completely new. It's up to you. One popular summer experience is living and learning on a college campus. Some programs even offer students the opportunity to earn college credit. Why would you spend your summer vacation studying? To get a taste of college and learn about a topic that interests you.

"Summer programs offer students a chance to immerse themselves in a subject they love, or are exploring, or think they love," says John Boshoven, counselor for continuing education at Community High School (MI) and director of college counseling for the Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit. "As useful as pursuing a passion is, finding out a career or subject isn't interesting and not worthy of the student's time is equally clarifying."

Some students (or their parents) make the mistake of choosing summer programs based on what might look good on a college application.

"A resume of exciting adventure used only to look good for the college application is seen as exactly that," notes Vickers. "The college admission folks will tell you that they want to see what makes the student the person he or she is." That means choosing summer activities based on your interests, not on what you think might impress an admission officer you haven't met at a college you haven't decided on yet.

Programming yourself

Of course, you can have a fun and productive summer without participating in a formal program. You might want to volunteer for a cause that's important to you, find a summer job, "shadow" an adult working in a career that interests you, or travel on your own or with your family. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination and resources.

"I encourage students to find a need in their own community and to make a plan to meet that need," says Pam Little, director of guidance and college counseling for Fayetteville Academy (NC). For example, one of her students borrowed instruments from a local music store, got permission to use a school building, and provided transportation for local underprivileged kids to learn about music for a week.

Whatever you choose to do, don't forget to leave some time to relax and spend with friends and family. Have a great summer!

Written by Jennifer Gross.

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COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE BOOKS AND RESOURCES

College Guide Books and Web Sites

Objective Data (“just the facts” on colleges):

College Handbook – College Board

Four Year Colleges – Peterson’s

College Board Web Site: www.collegeboard.com

Princeton Review Web Site: www.princetonreview.com

Subjective Data (get the “skinny” on colleges):

The Fiske Guide to Colleges

Insider’s Guide to the Colleges – Yale Daily

Colleges That Change Lives – Loren Pope

Looking Beyond the Ivy League – Loren Pope

The Big Book of Colleges – College Prowler (collegeprowler.com)

The College Finder – Steven Antonoff

College Visits

Campus Visits & College Interviews – College Board
Visiting College Campuses – Princeton Review

NACAC web site:

Individual college/university web site

HELPFUL WEB SITES:

COLLEGE PLANNING:

College planning time line from college in Colorado-11th grade

https://secure.collegeincolorado.org/High_School_Planning/High_School_Planning_Timeline/11th_Grade.aspx

College planning time line from National Association of College Admissions Officers -11th grade

<http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/CollegePrep/Pages/JuniorYear.aspx>

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

College admissions testing **from ACT:**

Test dates

<http://www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html>

Register for ACT:

<http://www.actstudent.org/>

College admissions testing **from SAT:**

Register for the SAT

<http://sat.collegeboard.com/register>

Test dates:

<http://sat.collegeboard.com/register/sat-dates>

FINANCIAL AID

FAFSA: free application for federal student aid: Every high school family should visit this site long before senior year to get familiar with the application on which most aid for college is determined.

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

college invest

<http://www.collegeinvest.org/>

css profile

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/8374.html>

fast web- scholarships

<http://www.fastweb.com/>

