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Virtual College Tours: *Take a Good Look*

Are you starting to plan for college? If so, you're probably envisioning what it'll be like to go on college visits. But, before you make that long drive, why not get a good glimpse through virtual visits instead? Get ready to go!

Look Inside

You're looking for a college that's a good fit for you — *academically, socially, and emotionally* — while preparing you for the world of work, right? So, as ironic as this may seem, the best place to start your college search has nothing at all to do with *colleges*. Instead, it starts with *you*!

Take a look inside yourself to understand why you're going to college in the first place, who you are, and what you're looking for in a school. Take time to learn about your interests, values, personality, and, most of all, your aptitudes, or natural talents. And think about college majors and career paths that could be a good match for you

Along with your parents, determine what you're looking for in a "good fit" college. Consider factors such as: size and type of school; academic environment; majors offered; admissions requirements; cost; availability of financial aid; location; housing options; student body characteristics; and student life.

The [Qualities That Will Make a College Right for You](#) worksheet developed by Dr. Steven Antonoff can help you identify what's most important in identifying colleges that are right for you. After completing the worksheet, create a spreadsheet listing your good-fit college criteria. Update the spreadsheet throughout your college search by filling in any pertinent information you've uncovered about your schools of interest. (*For more information:* [School Buff.](#))

Look Up

Now that you know what you're looking for, it's time to start exploring schools. There are many useful online resources you can use to look up *general information* about a college's



size, type, academic environment, majors / programs, admissions requirements, cost, availability of financial aid, location, student life, school profiles, and more. Check out:

- [College Board](#)
- [Peterson's](#)
- [The Princeton Review](#)
- [Niche](#)
- [College Confidential](#)

To find *specific information* about a college of interest, go directly to the school's website. From the home page, click on the "admissions" and / or "prospective students" link(s) for more information. Looking through the lens of your good fit criteria, identify colleges that are a potential match for you and update your college search spreadsheet accordingly.

Look Around

Now, take a virtual look around the schools you've identified as possible good fits. Here's how:

- **Take a virtual tour:** Many colleges produce and post their own videos for prospective students on their website. Sometimes these videos include a tour of campus, typically guided by a current student. In other cases, post-secondary institutions outsource the production of their virtual campus tours. And that's good news for you! You can "see" hundreds of colleges all in one place (without getting in the car).

For instance:

- [YouVisit](#) offers immersive, interactive virtual tours of more than 1,000 colleges campuses in 360-degree and virtual reality (VR) formats.
- [CampusReel.org](#) offers short, behind-the-scenes virtual tours of hundreds of college campuses. All 8,000 videos on the website are created and produced by students attending the school.
- [CampusTours.com](#) provides virtual tours (in both video and VR formats) as well as cutting-edge interactive maps for hundreds of post-secondary schools. What's more, you can also find out about and register for upcoming virtual and on-campus events through the CampusTours website.



CAREER VISION

- **Get a bird's eye view** of the community that surrounds the campus using Google Maps.
- **Scan social media accounts** (*i.e.*, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube) to get a sense of the college's admissions process, academics, student body, and the campus vibe.
- **Listen to pre-recorded webinars and podcasts** posted on the school's website and on social media.

Remember to update your college search spreadsheet as you gather information.

Look Closer

Of the colleges you've explored so far, which ones are worth a closer look? Get on their mailing lists right now! That way, you'll receive email notifications about upcoming virtual (and on-campus) programming and events for prospective students, such as:

- **Information sessions.** Hosted by the college's admissions representatives, these 30 – 60-minute virtual info sessions cover a wide range of topics, including admissions requirements and process; college costs / financial aid / scholarships; academics / majors offered; athletics; student life; and the community surrounding campus.
- **Student panel sessions.** Some colleges host virtual panel discussions during which current students talk about college life and answer questions from prospective students.

Want to speak with an admissions representative or a college student one-on-one without going to campus? Consider these options:

- **Virtual admissions appointment.** Schedule a phone or video chat appointment with an admissions representative. And make sure that the rep forms a positive impression of you!
 - Don't miss your appointment (or call to reschedule if you can't keep it).
 - Act professionally.
 - Prepare your questions in advance.
 - Send a thank you email after the meeting.



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Most importantly, never ask questions that are easily answered through the college's website. For instance, rather than asking "*Do you have an environmental policy major?*" ask "*Does your environmental policy major focus on state, local or federal policy (or a blend of all of these)?*".

You will have *demonstrated interest* in the college and its majors / programs while getting the specific information you need. And your rep will be impressed that you've done your homework! (*For more information:* [What "Demonstrated Interest" Means in College Admissions.](#))

- **Virtual college fairs.** Go to [Strive Scan's](#) webpage to find out about college fairs — including virtual fairs — and connect with admissions representatives from your schools of interest.
- **"Peer" appointment.** Some colleges allow you to set up a phone or video chat appointment with a student attending the school. Check the school's website to schedule an appointment.

Don't forget to update your college search spreadsheet with the new information you've gathered.

Look Forward

Of the schools you've "visited" from a distance, which ones *still* look like good fits for you? To get the whole picture, schedule an on-campus visit.