



College Fair Topics and Questions

Are you wondering how to start a conversation with a college rep? Here are some tips for conversing and getting answers to important questions. It's a good idea to write out a list of things that are important to you before you go.

Don't feel like you have strange priorities or weird questions if something off-beat is interesting to you. College reps hear the same questions all the time, so they'll be glad to hear something new.

- Start off with "Hello, how are you?" or "Hi, my name is..." for a relaxed beginning to your conversation.
- Try not to ask a vague question like "Tell me about your college," since the rep will have no idea where to start.
That can be frustrating for the college rep and the student, because the conversation will have no direction.
- Be specific with questions by saying things like "Tell me about class spirit" or "Can you give me examples of some campus traditions," instead. Those types of questions will give you a sense of the atmosphere and give the rep something specific to talk about.
- Ask for a list of majors that you can take with you and look over later.
- Ask about the enrollment deadline and the recommendations for taking the SAT and ACT. Some colleges will need scores earlier.
- Ask if there are any scholarship secrets. There are many little-known tricks that differ from college to college, but the conversation doesn't always get around to this in a rushed environment like a college fair.
- You will want to know the admission requirements, of course, but you may also want to ask whether admissions officers make decisions on numbers, or if they really do consider activities. Some colleges go by scores and grades and follow a formula. Other colleges really give greater weight to activities, experience, and interests.
- Ask if a student leader can contact you to give you a student's perspective. Provide an email address for this.
- Go ahead and ask about the food. Sometimes there are many choices and other times there aren't. Remember, you'll have to live with it for four years.
- Ask how many of the students drop out, transfer away, or how many stay and graduate. College reps may cringe at this one, because student retention is a touchy issue at many colleges. A low retention rate may be a warning sign, though.
- Ask: "What's the biggest complaint from current students?"
- Is tutoring available?
- Ask for a direct phone number for an admission counselor and a financial aid counselor, to avoid getting caught up in an automated phone quagmire at some point. Smaller colleges will be happy to provide this, but larger colleges may not. It's always worth a try.
- Find out if the administration listens to student concerns. This is one of the things you might want to ask a student leader.
- Ask if you'll have to pay for parking or if you'll have to walk a million miles from parking lot to classes.
- If you are very conservative or very liberal in your thinking, ask about the political/social climate. This is one of the things that could cause a feeling of discomfort or alienation down the road. It's not a silly question.



College Fairs

Booths, Crowds, Noise, and College Admissions

College fairs give you the chance to talk to admission officers and get the scoop on everything from what courses are offered to life on campus. Fairs can also help you rule out colleges, as well as introduce you to new ones.

You find noise and crowds at most fairs, and college fairs are no different. Whether it's ten colleges in your high school gym, or hundreds at a conference center -- like the fairs sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling -- fairs can be overwhelming. So, have a plan for before, during, and after you go.

Before the Fair

Ask your high school counselor when and where college fairs are being held in your area. Plan to attend as many as possible.

Characteristics to Consider

Before you set out, it will help to consider what you want from a college. Write down college characteristics that are important to you. Review websites and catalogs of colleges on your list and write down questions that aren't answered in the materials. You should also ask questions about your own interests, such as activities you'd like to pursue and course requirements for the majors in which you're interested.

What to Bring

Before you head out the door don't forget to bring a pen and small notebook, your questions, and a bag to hold all the college brochures and information you'll get. Consider printing out self-stick labels with your address, contact information, and graduation date to stick to college information cards at the fair.

During the Fair

Navigating a college fair can be challenging. There are many booths to visit and people to talk to. Focus your visit so you can get some in-depth knowledge about the colleges that really interest you.

- Review the list of colleges at the fair and plan to visit the colleges that interest you most.
- If the fair provides a map showing where colleges booths will be, plan out a route to avoid back-tracking.
- If the fair has information sessions with experts block out time to attend those that interest you.
- After you visit a college's booth take a few minutes to jot down what you've learned.

Try to leave some time at the end just to browse through some of the booths you didn't get to -- you could stumble on a great college you hadn't considered.

After the Fair

Spending the day at a college fair can be exhausting. You'll probably come home with a bag or bags full of information. Here are some post-fair dos and don'ts to keep you on track:

- DO relax when you get home. Take a break -- you've earned it!
- DON'T put the college materials in the back of your closet. Keep them on hand for when you're ready to review them.
- DO look through the materials, and your notes, within the week.
- DON'T keep everything. Weed out colleges that aren't a good fit.
- DO research colleges that interest you. Explore websites, request more information from admissions offices, and plan to visit.

Thanks to: The CollegeBoard and Grace Fleming for the article "Insider Secrets from a Former College Representative"