

Making the most of open days

So, it's your final school year and you're thinking about going to college or university – meeting new people, studying the subjects that you choose and not having to wear a uniform. Exciting times!

However, the choice of institutions can be a bit overwhelming. You may be wondering 'How do I know which place is best?' or 'How do I know I'll like it?' Well, that's where open days come in handy and to ensure that you get the most out of them we have some useful tips.

Pick 'n' mix

It is likely that you will attend a few open days so that you can compare colleges or universities and see which one you think is best for you. Have a look at prospectuses and websites to see which places teach your subject, make a shortlist of places you'd like to visit and then check to see what dates the open days are and whether you need to book a place. You may also find our articles '[Choosing where to study](#)' and '[Choosing what to study](#)' helpful at this stage.

Make sure that you pick the right open day - you'll find that some institutions have separate days for different subject areas. It's no good turning up to the law day if you've got forensic science in mind!

Open days are usually advertised on college and university websites, but a quick way of seeing them at a glance is to check out the relevant college or university pages, or the [upcoming events calendar](#), on Planit.

Plan ahead

Once you've decided which open days you want to attend, you should take a more in depth look at each college or university and what is happening at their open day. Check out the prospectus, website and even Facebook. Some institutions now have apps for their open days, which have information like maps and timetables of events. Check with the college or university to see if there is an app available.

Make sure that you:

- look at the information about the institution and the courses you are interested in
- read the part about the town or city where the college or university is – especially if you are considering moving away from home
- check out the itinerary of the open day as there may be tours and presentations – make a note about what you want to see, the times and the venues
- write a list of any questions that you have – this may be to do with the course/subject, the college or university facilities or even the town or city
- plan your journey so that you arrive in plenty of time to see and do everything you want to.

Keep calm and enjoy

When the open day arrives you'll hopefully be feeling excited! College or university is a whole new education

experience and there are lots of new things to discover, which starts at the open day.

Make sure that you have your list of questions, your itinerary of events and get stuck in! Great ways to make the day more informative and enjoyable include:

- talking to current students – you can ask them what it is like studying at the college/university, what the facilities are like and what the course is like. They will be able to give you answers that you won't find in a prospectus
- talking to the tutors/lecturers – find out as much as you can about the course and the people who teach it
- finding out about the student union and the clubs or societies available – you might want to get involved in something new outside of your studies
- exploring the campus, either with an organised tour or just a map and your sense of adventure
- picking up any leaflets or information that is available to take away (in addition to your own notes of course!)

If you are visiting a place that would involve moving away from home, make sure that as well as exploring the campus you also explore the town or city. You could be living there for at least 3 years so you really need to like the place.

And finally...

You'll probably come away from open days with lots of leaflets and information and it would be tempting to stick it all in a drawer and forget about it. However, it is useful to have a read through this information whilst the open day is fresh in your mind. You could organise your notes and even give the different aspects of the college or university marks out of ten. This is especially useful if you are attending a number of open days.