

MACLEAN'S

Guide to Getting In

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BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT TO SEE.

If you haven't done so already, take the time to book a campus tour at the schools you are seriously considering. Every school website sells a pretty picture, so nothing is a substitute for going in person and searching out if it's the right fit for you. Plus, it will get you excited for next year! But, what should you think about when taking a campus tour? How can you get the most out of your visit? Read on for our tips.

Book the right tour

Now, this sounds basic, but make sure you've booked the right tour. Some schools have multiple campuses, each home to different majors and fields of study. Make sure you sign up for the tour of the campus where you'd be spending most of your time. If the school offers more specialized departmental tours, make sure you prioritize attending those, as they'll likely be most relevant.

Befriend your tour guide

Tours are usually led by current students; take advantage of this and talk to your guide. You can chat with your mom any day of the week. Instead of hanging back with her, walk next to your tour leader and ask them, "What do you like most about being a student here?", "What did you wish you knew before enrolling?", "What's your favourite spot on campus?", etc. If your tour guide is in your program (lucky you!), ask them more specific questions or even if they'd be willing to meet with you for a coffee to chat more about their experiences. The insights of a current student are often the most honest and helpful.

Check out the space

Your university experience is about so much more than academics – the school you attend in many ways becomes your home for the next few years. So, think about what matters to you in terms of the space: do you want to be integrated into the downtown core of a city, or have a central green quad for throwing Frisbees and having picnics? Are you a science student seeking state-of-the-art labs, or an arts student dreaming of a gorgeous, extensive library? Do you have accessibility needs that need to be met? Check out what your commute will look like from residence to the buildings where most of your classes will be held. Keep these priorities in mind as you tour the campus, so that you don't miss out on the details that are most important to you.

Get a feel for the place

Falling in love with a school is a lot like falling in love with a person; sometimes it just happens and you don't know why. As you tour the school, go with your gut.

Do you feel at home here? Does this just seem “right”? That’s worth a whole lot, and that feeling of “rightness” can only come from an in-person visit, not a marketing-speak-filled website. Also, if your first feeling on touring a school is “this is not for me,” trust yourself. - Elissa Gurman