

8 Essential Tips To Get The Most From Private Elementary School Tours

Description



Touring private schools in L.A. is very time-consuming. Weâ€™ve written about [school tours](#) previously and since the fall tour schedule will be in full swing soon, we thought weâ€™d share our best tips to help you get the most out of each tour.

1. **Arrive early.** This canâ€™t be emphasized enough. The parking at a lot of private schools is in short supply and arriving late is stressful for you and makes a terrible first impression. Avoid parking in a spot reserved for a school official or the “auction winner”. If you need to cancel, call and let the school know youâ€™re not coming; donâ€™t be a “no-show”.

2. **Check out the schoolâ€™s website *before* you tour.** This will help you focus on areas that you may be interested in like the availability of athletic facilities or technology and it may help you formulate questions for the tour guide.

3. **Take notes!** Some tours are 2-3 hours long and its can be hard to remember key details. If youâ€™re taking notes with an iPhone or iPad, as a courtesy let the tour guide know that youâ€™re not texting. When the tour is finished, take 5 minutes to jot down notes. After the tour, itâ€™s tempting to want to hit the nearest Coffee Bean for a jolt of something caffeinated. But, take 5 minutes to write down your impressions of the school, the best things about the school and the aspects you may have disliked. Did you hear from the head of school? Write down something compelling he/she said. All of this will be useful later.

4. **Don't judge a school by your tour guide.** People giving school tours are typically admissions directors and school parents. It's hard not to form instant impressions of a school based on a tour, but try to stay neutral about the person leading the tour. They are a representative of the school, but not the entire school, which is filled with many other families and administrators.

5. **Look for school literature.** Pick up a copy of any school materials that are available at the front desk like the annual report, brochures, upcoming events. Add these to your file so when you get ready to write applications and prepare for your interviews, you have these documents that may not be available on the web.

6. **Stay neutral about other touring parents.** Try not to let other parents on the tour influence your opinion of the school. Stay neutral when it comes to observing other parents on your tour. They are touring, but may or may not end up at the school. Assuming that this might be your child's incoming class isn't accurate. It's only one tour of many. Notice a complete nut-case? Assume the tour guide does too.

7. **Create categories.** Try approaching a tour by thinking various categories. For example, practical issues like whether the school has a bus or hot lunch could be placed in one category. Educational issues like the type of school, class size, student/teacher ratio and the amount of homework could go in a separate category. This can help organize your thoughts as you compare schools and go through the admissions process. Becoming overly focused on logistics can hinder your ability to take a comprehensive look at a school. And, focusing only on educational elements may cause you to omit consideration of other matters. Anne Simon discusses [key considerations](#) families should think about in a previous post.

8. **Tour a LOT of schools.** We repeat this frequently since it is the only way you can determine which schools are the right ones for your child. If you plan to apply to 5 schools, tour 8 or more! You'll be able to cross a few off your list, most likely. And, you'll have a good idea of what is available geographically and in terms of educational philosophies.

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

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