



Campus Activities

A worthwhile college experience goes beyond the lecture halls and late nights at the library. Your time on campus offers you many ways to be active and engaged in the broader world around you. Campus activities play a vital part in your experience outside of the classroom.

The variety of organizations, sports groups, and other social clubs available to you is endless and appeals to every interest imaginable, from niche groups (Bocce Ball Club) to broad, nationally-based organizations (Amnesty International). Take advantage of the opportunities and don't be afraid to let your curiosity get the best of you; after all, there's no better time than now to try new things.

This chapter will discuss

- types of campus activities
- how to choose activities to participate in
- how and why to commit to your chosen activities

Types of Campus Activities

There are as many on-campus activities as there are student interests. Here's an overview to get you thinking about what might interest you most:

Academic Clubs and Societies

Some Academic Clubs and Societies are highly selective or invitation-only.

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato, Greek philosopher

Most simply require that you be interested in the subject. Examples include astronomy club, Spanish conversation club, and literary societies.

Culture and Identity

Some groups are formed based on the culture or identity of their members. Latino student associations and LGBTQ organizations are two examples.

Why Get Involved?

Consider
This ...

- Make friends
- Get to know college faculty and staff
- Get to know community members
- Play
- Develop skills
- Learn
- Make connections
- Build your resumé

Greek System

Fraternities and Sororities vary in their role, size, mission, and traditions from college to college and from group to group. You can find out more about your school's Greek system—its role on campus, how to join, and expectations for members—through the Greek Affairs Office.

Media

Does your college have a student-run newspaper, radio station, television network, online or print magazine? Depending on the medium and mission, you might find a place on staff as a writer, editor, advertising salesperson, graphic designer, videographer, DJ, etc.

Political

College has long been synonymous with political exploration and activism. From Amnesty International and Greenpeace to College Republicans and College Democrats, you will find a host of political organizations represented on campus.

Religious

Your school might have a specific religious affiliation or it might have diverse religious affiliations represented.

Special-Interest Groups

These groups are based on the common interests of their members. Photography clubs, mountain biking groups, and performing arts organizations are a few examples.

Sports

From intercollegiate sports to intramural sports to on-campus teams, leagues, and tournaments, there will be no shortage of ways for you to sweat; throw, hit, and bounce things; yell, shout and laugh; wear funny equipment, and wear yourself out. Lacrosse, skiing, skydiving, basketball, archery, and even bowling appear on lists of sports activities.

Student Government

Nearly every college has a student government. You can participate as an elected

*It is a happy
talent to know
how to play.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
American writer
and philosopher

officer or representative from your department, dorm, or club.

What Activities are Available?

To find out about your school's activities:

Ask other students about organizations that may interest you.

Visit your Student Activities Center or its website and review its list of activities.

Attend a campus activity fair. Many colleges hold regular events where representatives from student organizations share information about what they do and how to get involved.

Meet with your academic advisor to ask for her or his recommendations.

Go to a meeting. Throughout the year many student organizations will host new member meetings. Keep an eye on bulletin boards and campus publications to find these meetings.

How to Choose?

Don't. At least, don't choose yet. The best part of being a first-year college student is that there's an overwhelming, exhilarating array of possibilities. Why not play rugby and join the photography society and run for office in the student government—even if you've never done anything remotely similar ever before? You don't have to be an expert; you just have to be interested, show up, and play or work as hard as you can. We recommend that you check out a lot of activities now and get a feel for them. Try out those clubs that revolve around things you're already passionate about, but also try out the clubs that spark your curiosity or seem out of your comfort zone. Be open to finding a new passion.

After you've explored your options, reflect on what you hope to gain from your extracurricular activities. Ask yourself:

What is my motivation? Is it to make friends, develop a new skill, relax, help others, and/or get outside?

Which activities fit my needs? Make sure you fully understand the mission, values, and requirements of the organization.

Can I fulfill the requirements of the organization? Some clubs charge dues or initiation fees, or require members to travel and/or purchase uniforms and equipment. Some organizations take attendance and require members to fulfill a certain number of hours per month. Some require members to complete a task or demonstrate a certain skill level—world language clubs may require potential members to pass an oral fluency exam, for example, and scuba diving clubs

probably require their members be licensed.

Commit

Once you've explored what's out there, choose an activity or two that you really want to commit to. Commitment means **attending the meetings and events regularly, showing up on time** for activities, **being an active participant** in meetings and projects, and **providing leadership** by volunteering for roles within the organization.

Active, meaningful participation will challenge and fulfill you. Sure, you don't want to overextend yourself and spend so much time on activities that your academic work suffers. On the other hand, taking some time to pursue your passions outside the classroom and lecture hall can invigorate and enrich your

Campus Activities Exercises

1. Make a list of three or four extracurricular activities that interest you. What would be the benefits of getting involved in each activity? What would be the commitment level? What drawbacks, if any, would there be to getting involved in each one?
2. Choose two extracurricular events or activities to participate in this week. Afterwards, write about what you did and what you got out of each experience.
3. Which extracurricular events or activities would give you the chance to be with a diverse group of people? Select one to participate in and write about the experience (or make a presentation about your experience).