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Life & Culture 

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TOM MCMAHON: KID TIPS

Seeking college? TheU might be for you

A FEW YEARS ago, a young man in his freshman year of college had a vision for a better way to provide high school students with the information they need to find colleges that are a good fit. After graduating from Columbia University in 2005, he realized his vision by founding "theU," a company that produces short, lively and honest college video documentaries that are brimming with useful information.

Today, Doug Imbruce is at the helm of his company, working with former actors from The WB network (home of "Everwood") to provide hip narration of the college tours. And the best news -- it's all free.

One student left her endorsement on the Web site: "Each (video) communicates more about the school in 15 minutes than a Web site, counselor or anything else." I agree. Each campus video has eight short segments: Intro, Admissions, Academics, the Food, the Crowd, the Scene, the Setting and the Shelter.

Currently only the top 50 colleges have an official theU video, but hundreds more are in the pipeline. In the meantime, check out the endless number of student videos and the "College Confessions," offering honest insight into hundreds of college campuses.

I recommend this site (www.theU.com) to both parents and college-bound teens. But with one high-schooler still at home, I'm also holding on to my copies of the Princeton Review and the U.S. News and World Report "America's Best Colleges" edition.

Thanks to the parents who shared a kid tip this week.

College planning begins early: If your children aspire to attend a good college or university, make sure they are getting good counseling advice in high school. College entrance exams and specific high school courses are often prerequisites for applying to most universities. Good academic planning begins in middle school. -- M. Hopkins, Sacramento

Cool down the soup: Frozen vegetables work great to cool down a bowl of soup for my children. I use peas, corn, spinach and bite-size broccoli. The veggies warm up in a minute or two. -- B.R., Toronto, Canada

MUSIC, MAESTRO! When my 5-year-old began piano lessons (at her insistence), I worried about becoming a "practice nag" and taking all the fun out of music lessons. To avoid becoming a witch about practicing, I began requesting "piano concerts" from her instead of reminding her to practice. As much as possible, I make the request for my benefit -- e.g., I tell her that I would like to listen to some music while I put my feet up for a few minutes or while I'm washing dishes. -- Nancy Lee, Pasadena

Teens need affection, too: They might not be young kids anymore, but teenagers still need hugs or some form of affection from their parents. Don't embarrass them by being affectionate in public, but daily hugs or a kiss goodnight on their forehead could be a welcome reminder that you love them. I believe that some teens seek sex while what they really want is affection. People, not just teens, will get affection any way they can. -- Anonymous, Flagstaff, Ariz.

Note: Although most teens will not balk if we occasionally put an arm around their shoulder or give a loose hug, some might feel uncomfortable. When in doubt, ask for permission to hug. (T.M.)

Two timers for timeouts: When my children were younger and needed a brief timeout in the corner, I set

two timers -- one for me so I could keep track of the time, and one for them. I started out with three to five minutes and increased the time as they got older. Always be consistent in making them stay in timeout the required amount of time. -- Jenny R., Farragut, Tenn.

Tom McMahon is a syndicated columnist, college professor and author of the books "Kid Tips" and "Teen Tips." Visit his Web site at www.kidtips.com.

CALLING ALL TIPSTERS

Every parent has a favorite parenting tip. Send yours to tom@kidtips.com; fax/voice message to 925-461-6080 or write to KID TIPS, 300 W. 57th St., 15th floor, New York, NY 10019.



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