

Applying to Graduate School: Planning Ahead

If you are serious about graduate school, it is a good idea to get started early. You are advised to spend much of your junior year researching graduate programs and schools and making decisions about where you will apply. Though most deadlines for graduate school admissions fall around December or January, some may come as early as the August before your senior year. Other programs and institutions have “rolling admissions.”

The following may serve as a handy outline of tasks to accomplish as you gather information, make decisions, and proceed with the application process. Keep in mind that this time line is for those seeking to further their education the fall immediately following their college graduation.

Junior Year:

- Narrow your areas of interest/specialty. This will help you to effectively research schools and programs that might be the best match for you.
- Discuss your situation with your academic advisor. Gather as much information and advice as possible.
- Conduct research into programs and schools of interest. Select about five or six programs.
- Investigate requirements for programs of interest to you.
- Register for appropriate graduate admissions exams and prepare accordingly. GRE, GMAT, LSAT, and MCAT each have their own web sites that can be of help to you, providing an overview, test dates, costs, and sample questions.
- Find out how many letters of recommendation you will need and begin to speak with your advisor and instructors about your interests and needs. It is common for three to four recommendations to be required. Typically these are from undergraduate professors who can most effectively promote you, your abilities, interests, and motivation.
- Check into financial aid for which you may qualify.

Summer Following Junior Year:

- Take whatever graduate entrance exams are required.
- Plan campus visits to gather more information.
- Call or write to request application forms / materials.
- Check on deadlines, admissions requirements, policies, etc.
- Be clear about the application essay requirements for each program.
- Complete all first drafts of your essays.

Senior Year – Fall Semester:

- Provide your references with forms or requests for recommendations for graduate programs and scholarship or fellowship opportunities.
- Ask for appropriate faculty/staff to review your application essay(s) and to provide feedback and suggestions. Prepare final drafts.
- Take or retake appropriate graduate admissions exams as necessary.
- Make sure that your graduate admission scores are sent to the correct schools.
- Order transcripts from the Registrar's Office well in advance of application deadlines.
- Complete and proofread all completed graduate school & financial aid applications and supporting materials.
- Photocopy all of your materials and send the originals well ahead of the deadline.
- Call before the deadline to confirm receipt of your application if no notification is received.

Graduate School Resources Available On Line

<http://www.gradschooltips.com>

- Admissions essays / personal statements including for law and medical school
- Letters of recommendation
- Graduate / professional school interviews

<http://www.gradschools.com>

- Graduate school handbook
- Graduate school search tool
- Tips & tricks for graduate School
- Writing an application essay
- Financial aid information

<http://www.gradprofiles.com>

- Features information about programs of study, degree requirements, facilities, expenses, financial aid and faculty research

<http://www.petersons.com>

- Assists with the exploration of graduate schools

<http://www.gre.org/atglance.html>

- Graduate Record Exam

<http://www.gmat.org>

- Graduate Management Admission Test

<http://www.aamc.org>

- Medical College Admissions Test

<http://www.bookmarc.com/Aid-Links.html>

- Financial aid links for Medical School

<http://www.lsat.org>

- Law School Admission Test

<http://www.aboutlawschools.org/>

- Assists with the exploration of law schools