

# Applying to Graduate School



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## How do I know if I Should go to Graduate School?

Attending grad school is a big decision! The application process requires a lot of time, effort, and often money. The same can be said for the graduate degree itself. So how do you know if it's right for you?

1. Clarify your professional goals and consider if you need an advanced degree to reach them.
2. Do your research: check the websites of programs that interest you; talk to your faculty and professionals
3. in the field. It's easier to make a decision when you have a full picture of what the application requirements are and what the graduate school experience will be like!
4. Consider your personal situation: do you feel ready for another 1-8 years of schooling (depending on the degree and program)? Would it help to work in the field for a year or two before applying to school? Is this a financial investment you can make?

## How Long does Graduate School Typically Take?

- 1-3 years for Master's Degrees
- 3-5 years for Professional Degrees (ex. Juris Doctor, Doctor of Physical Therapy)
- 5-8 years for a PhD



## When Should I Start the Application Process?

Deadlines vary greatly by field of study and each individual program, so the most important thing is to review the requirements and deadlines of specific schools on their own websites. You'll want to start researching specific programs, learning their application requirements, and signing up for any required entrance exams about 18-24 months before you hope to start your graduate program. You'll need time to write your personal statement, write your graduate school resume, request letters of recommendation, send your transcripts, fill out financial aid information, and more! Be sure to take any required entrance exams (ex. LSAT, GMAT, MCAT, GRE) in enough time for your scores to process and be sent to each program to which you're applying.

## How do I Decide on a Program or School?

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a graduate program, even once you've established what type of degree you want. Ask yourself:

- Who would you want to work with on the faculty? What are their academic and research interests, and is that a good fit with your interests?
- What are the research (and internship, if applicable) options available?
- What's the program's reputation?
- Be careful of just looking at rankings. Also check out the program's stats, like how many students who start the program finish it? What's the percentage of graduates who get jobs in the field or pass a licensing exam (if applicable)?
- What's the cost? Consider the availability of assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships. Do they offer stipends and will the amount cover your cost of living? Is health insurance included?

## The Personal Statement

Your personal statement should tell a story that conveys to the admissions committee why you want to attain this specific type of degree in this specific field at their specific university. Yes, that's a lot of specifics! Show them that you've done your research about the field and their program. Share your personal, academic, and professional experiences in a way that illustrates you are ready for the huge commitment that is grad school. You have a unique set of experiences, talents, and interests - make sure the committee knows what you can contribute to their program! If they've asked you to answer special prompts or essay questions, make sure you do that clearly!

## What Will go on My Graduate School Resume?

A graduate school resume is a document that supplements your application. It provides the admissions committee with more information than what's included in the application and is designed to enhance your application to a school. The sections you choose to include and the order in which you choose to list them is up to you. Ask yourself, "What do you want the admissions committee to pay the most attention to?"

This resume might be longer, and more academically focused than a resume you use to apply for a job, and that's okay! Common resume sections include:

Education - This should be the most important entry. After providing the basics (name of undergraduate university, degree, graduation date, major, minor, GPA, etc.), select outstanding academic accomplishments to highlight for the admissions committee. These may be sub-topics under Education or they may be their own categories. Areas that may be included are: Research, Scholarships, Independent Study, International Study, Honoraries.

Academic Experience/Course Highlights - Highlight particularly relevant academic courses by providing more details, i.e. Describe two to three upper-level courses that provided hands-on experiences or in-depth study with bullet statements. (Do not list all courses.)

Research, Papers, Conference Presentations - If you have conducted research (either by yourself or with a team/professor) and written any papers or done presentations on your work, you will want to list those on your resume.

Employment, Internship, Volunteer, Community Involvement, and/or Related Experiences - Experiences in the field related to your intended graduate school major are significant. Most graduate schools prefer applicants with a combination of academic and experiential preparation. Some graduate schools require volunteer or internship experience.

Activities - If you participated in campus or community activities that developed your leadership, time management, or other skills important to your success in graduate school, include these activities and provide details that show your active participation.

Additional Categories - Additional categories you might choose to include (don't be afraid to generate your own): Professional Associations, Leadership Experience, Certifications, Foreign Languages (remember to indicate level of proficiency)