



Tips for Applying to Graduate School

A-State Online Writing Center

Why apply to graduate school?

There are many reasons to consider applying to graduate school. For some, more schooling is a way to continue broadening their horizons in their undergraduate field. For others, it means adding more expertise to their resumes in order to get a pay increase at a current or desired occupation. Overall, graduate school is a way to enrich your learning experience and be presented with more doorways that lead to new and exciting opportunities for you, both personally and professionally. If this potential experience is something that interests or excites you, we're here to help you get started on applying to your dream graduate school program!

Questions to ask yourself before applying:

- What are my professional goals for the next 2-5 years?
- What are my personal goals for the next 2-5 years?
- What is my budget for graduate schooling?
- Do I want to be a part-time or full-time graduate student?
- Do I want to attend classes in-person, online, or a combination of both?
- What kind of university do I want to attend, and what programs do I want them to offer me?
- For graduate school, do I want to stay close to home or move to a new place?
- Does my desired university require me to take a test before entry, such as the GRE?

Apply as early as possible

Applying to graduate school has many pieces that must come together before your application is fully complete, much like a giant puzzle. It is important to start putting it together as early as possible to reduce stress and reach those early deadlines. Below is a checklist of these items so that you can get started:

1. First and foremost, check for the **deadline** to apply to your university; this will help you plan for all other steps in the application process.
2. If necessary for your chosen program, take any entrance exams that you will need to complete and pass to apply (such as the GRE or the TOEFL).

3. Visit the university's webpage and look up the official application you will need to fill out to apply to their graduate program. Fill it out completely and attach any documents that it asks for, such as a statement of purpose, past transcripts, experience in the field, etc.

If it is unclear what documents you are required to fill out, contact your potential advisor directly to be sure that you gather all documentation that you may need. Every college is different when it comes to required graduate school documentation, so be sure to make an application checklist specific to your university of choice and check it off every time you complete a component.

4. If you are interested in financial aid for graduate school, be sure to fill out the FAFSA form as early as possible; you can access it here: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. (Even if you end up not going to graduate school during the year that you anticipate, you can turn down the financial aid that is offered to you and reapply for it the next year or any years following with no ramifications!)

Don't be afraid to ask for help!

If you're feeling overwhelmed with the application process, reach out to potential or past college advisors or friends who are currently enrolled in graduate school. These people can answer any questions you may have and ease your worries. They may also be able to point you in the direction of college fairs and other events to help you get acquainted with graduate school cultures and connections.

Don't be afraid of rejections; learn from them!

If you apply to graduate school and don't receive the acceptance letter you anticipated, don't worry. Most rejections come with some viable feedback in order for you to get the results you want after the next try. If they don't, you can still reach out and ask for it. This delay can also give you more time to gain experience, advance test scores, or apply for financial aid to assist you for whenever you get accepted.