



ANOTHER **DEGREE** OF SUCCESS

Roadmap to Graduate School

Not sure how to get into grad school? Need clarification about the grad school application timeline? We can help. Here's a roadmap for the graduate school application process that should answer all of your questions...and if it doesn't, just [let us know](#) and we'll find you the answer!

1. Do your research.

About a year before you submit your graduate school applications, you should begin diligently researching potential grad school programs and building a list. Starting your research at the last minute can lead to a rushed decision and disappointment in the program where you landed, so take the time to dig into each school you're considering.

2. Cultivate a list.

Take your general list of potential schools and start "grading" each one based on the information you found and any responses you received to your inquiries. Talk with your professors about your list. At this point, you may start eliminating some programs as you compare and learn more, but don't narrow your list down too much. You still have plenty of time to do that.

3. Plan some virtual campus visits.

The information you'll get from websites or promotional materials will only tell you so much about a particular program or institution. [Virtual campus tours](#) can help you get a feel for the campus culture and facilities each school has available.

Schedule one-on-one virtual discussions with faculty, admissions staff, and/or current students to learn more about the unique features and opportunities of each program. You'll especially want to be in touch with the graduate coordinator from the department you plan to apply to.

You can also look into programming and services from the school's graduate school, career development, and alumni offices to get a sense of the resources available.

Some in-person visits may still be possible during the pandemic, but be sure to check with each school and observe all health and safety protocols.

4. Prep for standardized tests.

Long before applying, you should [prepare for the standardized test\(s\)](#) required for your respective path. Many programs require you to take the GRE, GMAT, LSAT, or MCAT. Be sure to check if any of these grad school requirements have [shifted due to COVID-19](#).

You can find information about the most common standardized tests via the Educational Test Service ([ETS](#)), the Graduate Management Admission Council ([GMAC](#)), the Law School Admission Council ([LSAC](#)), and the Association of American Medical Colleges ([AAMC](#)). You can also access materials online (including many free resources) to help you prepare for these tests from companies such as [Barron's](#), [Kaplan](#), [Peterson's](#), and [Princeton Review](#), as well as find printed materials at your local library or bookstore.

5. Keep your ear to the ground.

At this point you've received a good bit of information from faculty and the graduate school, but you can also look to press coverage and the latest [U.S. News & World Report's rankings](#) to learn more about the strengths of each program you're considering. While rankings are one consideration, the experience and success of current and past students are important. Don't be afraid to reach out to them to get an honest opinion on a particular program. And follow the university's, graduate school's, and department's social media channels.

6. Review and apply.

Once you've narrowed down your list to a few schools you're seriously considering, review the application processes, requirements, and deadlines for each program. In addition to the requirements at the graduate school level, there may be additional requirements specific to your program. Some programs ask for a personal statement or writing sample, or even a video presentation. Some require interviews before you submit your application, others only conduct interviews after you formally apply, and in some cases, interviews are only conducted with candidates being considered for fellowships or other awards.

Make a comprehensive list of the required materials and grad school application deadlines. Now, lay out your application schedule. As applications begin to open, set aside dedicated amounts of time to complete your applications without any interruptions or distractions.

7. Make the choice.

You put your heart and soul into your applications, played the waiting game, and received the letters of acceptance and even some denials. Now it's time to weigh your options and revisit each program. You may want to schedule follow up discussions with faculty. Ask yourself: Which faculty and graduate students seemed most welcoming and interested in you? Which offered the best assistantship or fellowship terms? Which emphasized research opportunities and funds? Which libraries, labs, and other resources are better for what you want to study? Which has graduates getting jobs or into Ph.D. programs? Now you can make your decision regarding which program you're going to attend. Take some time to celebrate and thank those who helped you along the way.

Be sure to thoroughly read the admitted student information you were sent. This will include instructions regarding your enrollment deposit, funding, housing, admitted student programs, courses and scheduling, orientation, and more. Take note of any important deadlines on your calendar. Reach out to your new classmates to compare notes and discuss your initial impressions of the program. Work on plans to relocate, if necessary, and start your [financial planning](#) (it's never too early to start saving!).

During & After Grad School: Think about your future.

Months, probably even years, of hard work, preparation, and planning has paid off—you're in grad school! So, now what? Continue planning for your future. Take advantage of any programming career services that your graduate school and department have to offer, network with alumni, and research potential internship opportunities and future employers. Put yourself out there. Get involved. Go to conferences. Publish in journals or maybe even start your own blog. Even though the journey is just beginning, it's important to start mapping out your career path.

[Get more guidance around applying to graduate school at our Grad School Roadmap events.](#) We'll be holding virtual round table discussions every Friday at noon throughout October.