

preparation timeline

The following timetable will help you apply to graduate programs. Although not every task will be necessary for you, following many of these steps should enhance your chances for success.

Junior Year (or before)

- Start reading about careers in your field. Explore your interests with faculty.
 - Attend colloquia, seminars, and other events sponsored by your department.
 - Meet with your advisor or other professors in your department to determine electives that might be assets in applying to graduate school.
 - Find out if there is a departmental honor society. What are its qualifications?
 - Begin to determine which faculty members you would like to write letters of recommendation. Try to take as many classes from them as possible.
 - Get acquainted with the Career Center to see what resources and advising they have for applying to graduate school.
 - Attend the Graduate and Professional School Day. Go prepared with questions for the program in which you are interested.
 - Find out about state, regional, and national conferences in your discipline. Attend those that interest you if you are able to attend.
 - Send away for bulletins for your discipline's standardized test (e.g., GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT). Use study guides, practice exams, and preparatory courses to estimate what your score may be.
 - Sign up to take the MCAT in the spring.
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Summer Before Senior Year

- Compile a preliminary list of graduate programs in your field by carefully studying catalogs and directories of graduate programs.
 - Compare your qualifications with admission requirements.
 - Contact those programs that seem a good match to obtain additional information about the program and financial aid. Ask for application packets.
 - Compile a final list of programs to which you will apply. If you can afford it and it seems worthwhile, visit the campuses of programs that interest you.
 - Plan and schedule your application strategy. Pay careful attention to deadlines, particularly regarding financial aid, which often has earlier deadlines than admissions applications.
 - Calculate application fees and make sure you have enough money to cover them (some schools waive this fee because of financial hardship).
 - Finalize which professors will write your recommendation letters.
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September of Senior Year

- Apply in the first week of September (or earlier) to take your discipline's standardized test in October.
- Request your undergraduate transcript and include it in the packet of information you prepare for those writing letters of recommendation.

- Prepare a resume for the same purpose.
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October of Senior Year

- Take the GRE or other appropriate exam; request that scores be sent to all schools to which you will apply.
 - Contact individuals from whom you will request letters of recommendation.
 - Begin filling out your financial aid and application forms.
 - Write first drafts of essays; ask for feedback from others.
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November of Senior Year

- Request that your undergraduate transcripts be sent to the institutions to which you are applying.
 - Finalize financial aid forms.
 - Finalize application forms.
 - Get feedback and write the final draft of essays.
 - Supply individuals who will write your letters of recommendation with your resume, transcripts, and forms for each school.
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December of Senior Year

- Carefully prepare and mail each application. Be sure to photocopy each in its entirety.
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January of Senior Year

- Contact professors whom you have asked to submit letters of recommendation, and confirm that they were sent.
 - Thank those who sent them.
 - Confirm that the graduate schools received your completed applications.
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February-March of Senior Year

- Wait
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April of Senior Year

- Celebrate! (or regroup)
- Finalize your financial arrangements for the first year of graduate school.
- Call or write the people who wrote your letters of recommendation and inform them of your application's outcome.

