

Your Checklist to Getting Into Graduate School Without Missing a Step

It's never too early to get ready for your master's degree. Our grad school planning checklist can help you stay on track for application deadlines.



Two to Three Years Before the Application Deadline	One Year Before the Application Deadline	Summer Before Applying	Semester You Are Applying	After You Have Applied
<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss your interests and career goals with your counselor or adviser, and start brainstorming and researching grad school options.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure the classes you've chosen will meet the prerequisites for potential graduate programs.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Consider getting involved in a research project or plan on writing a senior thesis.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Start building a network of professions and professionals in the field you're pursuing.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If you're planning on law or med school, get in contact with a pre-professional adviser to ensure that you meet the academic requirements.</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Decide on your area of study.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to your network of professors, advisers and career counselors about your interest in graduate school. They are excellent resources for narrowing down your choice of school and can provide great letters of recommendation.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Continue your research on grad school programs and universities.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Consider contacting professors who you would be interested in working with. Ask about their research and see if it matches your interests.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Visit admissions sites for applications, deadlines, course listings and financial aid information.</div><div><div>Pro tip: Compile this information in one document and add the deadlines to your calendar.</div></div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Dig deep into information about financial aid. Research scholarship, fellowship and graduate and teaching assistantship opportunities.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Register and prepare for graduate admission tests: GRE, LSAT, GMAT or MCAT.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If you are planning to go to law or medical school, register for the national application services: AMCAS for medical school and LSDAS for law school.</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize your research on programs and funding sources.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take required graduate admission tests.</div><div><div>Pro tip: Take your tests before August to allow yourself time to retake them if necessary.</div></div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Visit prospective schools. Talk with admission staff, current students and faculty.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Use the information you've gathered in your application essays.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Draft your essays. Have your advisers and writing center review them. Reread and revise your essays until you are confident that they are stellar.</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take or retake any graduate admissions test.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take any GRE Subject tests, if needed.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> At least three weeks before the application deadline, request letters of recommendation from professors and supervisors.</div><div><div>Pro tip: Supply professors with work you have done for them, so they have something to reference.</div></div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize your applications and ask trusted professionals to review them.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Research how the graduate school would like files (transcripts, essays, and recommendation letters) forwarded to them. Some have delivery systems, while others require you to upload to specific sites.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Gather and submit your application, including admissions test reports, official transcript, letters of recommendation, and application essays, depending on what the master's degree program requires.</div><div><div>Pro tip: Make copies of everything you send.</div></div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Complete all financial aid applications, including FAFSA, assistantship and scholarship applications.</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If interviews are part of the application process, make arrangements to complete them.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a contingency plan in case you don't get into any programs. This might include working, interning, volunteering, or beefing up your academic resume by taking more classes or a certificate program.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Once you get your acceptance letter (Yay!), visit the school and speak with the faculty and current students.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If you have multiple acceptance letters, evaluate your options and offers.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Once you've made your decision, notify the other institutions about your status.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Send thank you letters to your recommendation writers.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to fellow students in your cohort and see if they want to meet before the first day of school.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Find housing if you need it.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Congratulations. You have made it through the graduate school application cycle. Time to celebrate!</div></div>