



Timeline for Applying to Graduate School

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This is a general timeline for the total application process, assuming you seek to enroll in a graduate program during a fall term. Some graduate programs have firm deadlines; some have “rolling admissions” and accept applications year-round. Timelines can vary greatly for professional program applications (e.g., law, medicine, MBA) so be certain to research field- and institution-specific deadlines; pay careful attention to individual deadlines for the programs you are considering and plan accordingly.

Spring/Summer (approximately 18 months in advance of the fall in which you plan to enroll)

- As soon as you are aware of your interest in graduate school, begin talking to faculty for recommendations and suggestions of programs.
- Use print and online guides to graduate programs to research programs. Review program websites.
- Write a general rough draft of personal statement.
- Begin to prepare for standardized tests. Depending upon application timelines and type of program, you may wish to first take tests in spring or summer, for possible retest in fall (if needed).

August – September

- Meet with faculty to discuss personal statement and goals, continue to research and evaluate programs to narrow down application pool.
- Begin to ask faculty about providing recommendation letters.
- Investigate application procedures and timelines for all programs of interest, to ensure you are able to submit all requirements in the necessary timeframe.
- Sign up for standardized tests if not already done.

October

- Decide on programs you wish to apply to.
- Take standardized tests (if not already done).
- Review all financial aid application requirements and research options.
- Complete your essays and personal statements. Be certain you have tailored your writing to the questions asked by each individual program!
- Order transcripts from undergraduate institutions.

November

- Complete application forms.
- Provide recommenders with all details, instructions, materials needed for recommendation letters.

December / January

- Submit applications. Even if deadlines are later, it is good to apply early.
- Apply for any financial aid options as early as possible, as well, so that you have the most available options.

February

- Contact programs about the possibility of visiting; take trips if possible.
- Participate in Admissions interviews (not always used, may occur earlier in the process).
- Learn about Admission usually no later than mid-to late-April (often much earlier).