



APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL TIMELINE

The most important thing to remember when applying to a graduate school program is to start early, research well, and follow-up on everything. Use the information below to initiate and organize your graduate school search and application process.

JUNIOR YEAR:

- Keep your grades up. Graduate programs sometimes place a heavy emphasis on GPA.
- Understand standardized tests. Most graduate programs require applying students to complete an assessment like the [GRE](#), [LSAT](#), [MCAT](#), etc. Identify when and where the tests are being administered and plan accordingly.
- Generate a list of possible graduate school options. The [Peterson's guide](#) and [GradSchools.com](#) categorize programs by location, size, degree type, area of study, etc.
- Research graduate programs with the following questions in mind: “What do you want out of a program?”, “Are there faculty conducting the kind of research that you are interested in?” or “Will the program offer significant opportunities?”. Also consider the following aspects of each program you investigate:
 - Geographical location
 - Faculty in specialty area
 - Costs
 - Financial aid available
 - Practical experience
 - Where the graduates are working
 - Housing opportunities
 - Diversity within the program
 - Resources available
 - Facilities (labs, research centers, etc.)
 - Reputation
- Reinforce current relationships with professors to secure future recommendations letters. Current professors can also be a great source of information since they have completed an advanced degree.

JUNIOR YEAR: Summer

- Study and take the respective standardized test or schedule a date for the fall.
- Narrow your school choice. Decide on one or two favorites, as well as one or two backups.
- Arrange a visit to your schools of interest to connect with current students and become familiar with the schools' environment, if possible.
- Request application materials from graduate schools or ask questions about the online application system. Check other application requirements and ensure that you know the due date for everything.
- Does your online image need a clean up? If an admission counselor were to find you on Facebook, would it hurt your candidacy?
- Update your resume and have it reviewed by the University Career Center.

SENIOR YEAR: September/October

- Depending on your area of study, consider researching the faculty within your desired program to examine their research interest. If you locate a professor of interest, you may contact him/her to express interest and ask questions. Professors are very busy, so be sure to have a reason for sending an email/leaving a message, and be careful with the time you are requesting.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty. Give your recommenders the following information:
 - An overview of your experiences and/or a copy of your resume.
 - Deadline date. List a date that is a week or two before the actual date.
 - Name of the school and program to which you are applying.
 - Instructions on how to submit the recommendations (via email, a database system or a letter).



- Draft your [statement of purpose](#). Consult the instructions for each graduate program regarding the statement of purpose, as directions may vary. Make an appointment with the UMD Writing Center to have it reviewed.
- Take any required standardized test!
- Attend area [graduate school fairs](#) to network with admission counselors and gain inside information.
- Research scholarships and potential sources of financial aid available through each program you apply to.

SENIOR YEAR: November/December

- Follow-up with professors to ensure recommendations have been sent and send thank you notes/emails.
- Have official [transcripts sent](#).
- Polish off your statement of purpose.
- Complete application forms adhering to stated deadlines.

SENIOR YEAR: January/February

- Submit applications adhering to stated deadlines. Ensure you have a record of all of the documentation you submit. Submit your application early to avoid last minute rushes and complicated situations.
- Fill out FAFSA after January 1st to apply for financial aid. Remember, you will eventually have to include a copy of your federal income tax return.
- Check with the graduate program to ensure that all required application materials have arrived.
- Prepare for a phone and/or an on campus admission interview (optional in some cases; required in others).

SENIOR YEAR: March/April

- Make a decision. After you have heard from all of the schools, send your acceptance and letters of decline promptly.
- Finally, the process is over! Do not forget to send thank you letters to all the people that helped you, such as recommenders, friends, etc. Stay in contact with your recommenders because you never know when you may need them again.

Exploration Resources

- UMD Career related [links for graduate and professional schools](#)
- [What Can I do with a graduate degree in...?](#)
- About.com, [Applying to Graduate School](#): Parts of the Grad School Application
- What you need to know about [medical school](#)
- [Law school](#) information

Advising Options

- The [Pre-Law Professions Advising Office](#) serves all current and former students at the University of Maryland interested in law school and legal careers.
- The [Reed-Yorke Health Professionals Advising Office](#) is available to advise students on health related graduate school admission.
- The [University Career Center @ BSOS](#) meets with students individually to discuss strategies for choosing, applying to, and evaluating graduate school offers.
- The [UMD Writing Center](#) offers feedback on personal statements in individual appointments and through workshops each fall and spring semester.



University Career Center
& The President's Promise

College of Behavioral and Social Sciences

[@UMDCareerCenter](#) | www.careers.umd.edu | www.ter.ps/UCCBSOS