

Grad School: Application Timeline

Follow this general timeline to keep yourself on track. Time frames are approximate: Check the deadlines for your schools of interest and adjust accordingly.

Junior Year (Fall)

Many graduate schools look at applicants' grades from the last two years of undergraduate courses. If your GPA is an issue, it's time to pull your grades up.

Junior Year (Spring)

Decide which fields interest you, then start looking for programs and schools that match your interests.

As part of your research, investigate what kind of financial aid options will be available to you at the various institutions, including grants, loans, fellowships, and assistantships. This will help you weed out programs that you can't pursue because they don't offer the level of support you need.

Schedule your entrance exams. You may want to take these exams in the spring of your junior year so you get them out of the way (and have time to retake them if necessary) and can spend the fall filling out your applications and working on your writing samples.

Summer Before Senior Year

Most graduate schools look for well-rounded individuals with good grades *and* some relevant work experience on their resumes. An internship can be an excellent way to gain some professional experience in your chosen field. In some fields, volunteer experiences are also helpful—provided they give you relevant experience and are not simply “envelope stuffing” exercises. Stop in at your college's career center for help in identifying internship and volunteer opportunities.

Senior Year (Fall)

Get your transcripts from all your post-secondary education, including an up-to-date transcript for your current institution. Be prepared to have transcripts from study-abroad and other institutions that transferred credits.

Line up references and provide them with the information they need to write a complete reference.

Schedule your entrance exams. If you weren't happy with your scores or decided to give yourself more time to prepare, you can take your entrance exams in the fall. (Some exams offer multiple test dates in the fall, enabling you to retake your exams again if necessary.)

Fill out your applications. Take your time, read directions carefully, and check and re-check your applications to ensure they are complete and error-free. Have someone proofread your applications.

Senior Year (Mid-Term Break/January)

Submit your applications.

Senior Year (Spring)

This is when acceptance letters begin to arrive. If you have applied to and been accepted at multiple schools, you may want to pay another visit to your top choices. Talk about your plans with a trusted faculty member or a career counselor at your undergraduate institution.

Fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) if you plan to apply for financial aid. (You'll need your prior year's income tax return to complete this form.)

Once you make your decision, **notify the school of your acceptance.** As a courtesy, tell the other schools that you are declining their offers.

If you'll be relocating for graduate school, **start researching housing options** in your new location. Can you afford to live alone, or will you need to find a roommate? Does the school offer assistance with housing or pairing graduate students as roommates? If so, call on those resources.

Guide provided courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

