

GRADUATE SCHOOL PRIMER

Step 1: Preparation for Graduate School

- 1) Take rigorous science courses and earn good grades in them. Don't avoid important courses.
- 2) Take the GRE's early (Junior year) and often. Take a course if it will help.
- 3) Make sure professors know who you are.
- 4) Conduct research with a professor if you can.

Step 2: Choosing a Graduate School

- 1) Research programs that excel in your area of interest.
- 2) Identify faculty who are active in research (3 paper/year, grants) at each.
- 3) Contact faculty to see if they are accepting graduate students and have interest. Talk to their graduate students.
- 4) Make sure there is available support.
- 5) Make a list of schools in 3 categories: longshots, good chance and safe.

Step 3: Applying to Graduate School

- 1) Organize yourself for deadlines and needs for each application and devise a timetable.
- 2) Request transcripts and GRE scores and confirm that they are sent/received.
- 3) Write a simple, direct personal statement that includes nothing prior to college unless it is really impressive. Include: 1) important experiences/accomplishments as an undergraduate, 2) important professional/research experiences while in college, 3) what you hope to accomplish in graduate school and why and 4) your career goals. Include nothing negative; everything you did was planned.
- 4) Request letters from research advisors and professors in classes that you did well in the area that you are interested as much as possible. Research active professors are the best.
- 5) Send each reference a copy of your personal statement so their letter can support it.
- 6) Make sure your application package is complete well prior to the application deadline and inform the professor that you intend to work with.
- 7) Update you application package with any accomplishments between application and acceptance.

Step 4: Accepting the Offer

- 1) If you get into your top choice, review the offer and accept as soon as possible and inform your intended advisor.
- 2) If you have not heard from your top choice but receive another offer, contact your proposed advisor at your top choice(s) and inform them that you have an offer.
- 3) Don't reject any offers until you have an acceptable offer or you have to.