GUIDE TO APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Congratulations, you’ve made the decision to apply to graduate school. Next you need to prepare to apply, a process that often takes up to eighteen months depending on your selected degree program.

Graduate schools evaluate applicants based on quantitative components (GPA, test score) and qualitative components (personal statement, resume, letters of recommendation, etc.). Your success in matriculating into top schools of interest will depend on your capacity to demonstrate a strong balance between your quantitative and qualitative qualities.

How to Apply
After doing your research, you need to select the programs to which you will actually apply. Most prospective graduate students will apply to several programs, often ranging from the ideal program, through good choices, to a "back-up" program. Including a few safety schools is always a wise decision as these are the schools highly likely to offer you competitive financial awards. Applications to graduate programs are often complicated, require fees, and have specific deadlines.

Required Tests
The test you have to take depends on the field you plan to enter. You should take these tests early. Programs require test scores to consider your application. Scores remain “current” for about five years. Tests include:

- **GMAT**  Graduate Management Admission Test
- **LSAT**  Law School Admission Test
- **MCAT**  Medical College Admission Test
- **DAT**  Dental Admissions Test
- **GRE**  Graduate Record Examination
- **MAT**  Miller Analogies Test is used by some graduate schools

Personal Statement
The personal statement may be requested to assess your interest in and motivation for the program or field and also to assess your ability to write clearly, creatively and correctly. Often personal statements include:

- What is special about you
• When or how you became interested in the field
• What you’ve learned from related employment, volunteer activities, or research
• Your career goals
• Explanations of gaps or peculiarities in your academic record
• If you have overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships
• Personal characteristics (integrity, persistence) or special skills (leadership, writing) you have that would enhance your prospects for success in this program or field
• Why you are interested in that particular program
• Anything else that you feel makes you a strong applicant

Resume or Curriculum Vitae
Graduate and professional programs may require you to submit a resume or curriculum vitae addressing your qualifications for the program. Though similar in many regards, the curriculum vitae or CV is usually more detailed and focused on scholarly accomplishments (research, publications, presentations). In either case, the information contained should be organized to support your application. The CDC can help you develop an effective resume or CV. There are also numerous resources available in print format or over the Internet.

Letters of Recommendation
Most graduate and professional programs will require you to obtain letters of recommendation from people in a position to speak to your qualifications. They may specify the types of recommendations that must be submitted (academic, personal, employment). Some programs will ask that detailed forms be submitted, others will ask for individualized letters. Graduate schools generally prefer faculty recommendations over employer recommendations. A good ratio is to select two academic recommenders to one professional.

In general you should:
• Check the program’s requirements for recommendations before asking anyone. Know the type of recommendations being requested and the format they must follow
• Broach potential recommenders by asking, “Are you comfortable writing me a strong letter of recommendation?” thereby giving individuals the option to decline
• Ask permission before listing the name of anyone as a reference
• Send a written request for the recommendation to each person being asked. At least two weeks before the due date, provide each with:
  o A copy of your resume/curriculum vitae and any other relevant information
  o The form or guidelines that outline exactly what is expected in the recommendation
  o The deadline by which the recommendation must be received
  o Correctly addressed, stamped envelope or the web address where the letter should be uploaded
• Send a thank you note to each person who takes the time to write you a letter of recommendation
The Interview
Some graduate and professional programs require a personal interview as part of the application process. Even if not required, you may find an interview to be a useful way for you to determine if a program would be a good choice for you.

If an interview is required you should take time to prepare yourself well. You should do as much research about the program, its faculty, and the institution as possible. You should be able to speak about yourself in relationship to the program and field, why you are interested in that particular program, and your future goals as they relate to completion of the program. In most interviews the applicant will have an opportunity to ask questions. These should address information that will help you assess the suitability of the program for you. You should not ask questions that are already answered in program literature.