GRADUATE SCHOOL
Preparation Checklist

A general guide for starting grad school ahead of an application deadline. Every program is different, so adjust the timing to fit your deadlines.

1-2 Years Before

- [ ] Explore programs and required exams
- [ ] Gain research or related experience
- [ ] Get to know potential recommenders
- [ ] Attend an open house or info session

12 Months Before Applying

- [ ] Narrow your list and track deadlines, requirements and fees in a spreadsheet
- [ ] Take or retake admissions exams, if required
- [ ] Contact faculty at research-based programs
- [ ] Ask recommenders if they'll write a letter for you
- [ ] Start drafting your personal statement and resume/CV
- [ ] Research scholarships, fellowships and assistantships
- [ ] Ask programs about application fee waivers

6-9 Months Before Applying

9 MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Create accounts in each application portal

8 MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Finalize your list of programs
- [ ] Get feedback on your statement and resume/CV from a Career Consultant and the Writing Center
- [ ] Formally request letters, 4–6 weeks before deadlines
- [ ] Complete the FAFSA if you'll use federal aid

7 MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Tailor your personal statement for each program
- [ ] Request official transcripts
- [ ] Submit applications early, before each deadline
- [ ] Remind recommenders 1–2 weeks before deadlines

6 MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Confirm transcripts, scores and letters were received
- [ ] Save copies of everything you submitted

Once Decisions Are Out

- [ ] Compare offers, including cost and funding
- [ ] Visit campuses, if possible, to help decide
- [ ] Accept your offer and let other programs know
- [ ] Send thank-you notes to recommenders and mentors

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