

GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING



How to begin

1. Start early to look at possible graduate schools that you would be interested in attending. Visit the schools' websites for more information about the programs they offer. It is often more important that you choose a school based on the professors you want to work with than it is the actual school.
2. Narrow down your search to a handful of possible schools. Do some research to learn about current projects underway at each school. As you research, try to figure out which projects or types of projects most interest you and the names of the professors working on them.
3. Begin to send e-mails and make phone calls to the departments asking questions about the programs.



What do graduate schools look for?

Required

- GPA above a 3.0
- GRE scores
- Statement of Purpose
- Letters of Recommendations (usually 3)

Recommended

- They are looking for students who would be the best fit for their program. If you do not contact a professor, you will have a significantly lower chance of being accepted.
- The graduate committee wants enthusiastic students who show through their academic experience and in their statement of purpose that they have a clear direction and goals for their future.

TIMELINE

The timeline is a suggested schedule of when each step in the application process should be completed **before your expected first day of graduate school.**

- 16 MONTHS**
 - Visit graduate school websites and prepare specific questions to ask professors.
 - Read one or two articles published by professors with whom you might like to study.
- 16 MONTHS**
 - Prepare to take the GRE.
 - Start studying about 2-4 months in advance.
 - Use a GRE-prep book and online practice tests by The Princeton Review or similar companies.
 - Allow time for a re-take, if needed.
- 15 MONTHS**
 - Schedule a GRE test date.
- 14 MONTHS**
 - Take the GRE.
- 12 MONTHS**
 - Start sending e-mails to professors *and other graduate students* in the same program.
 - Show your interest in either working with them or learning more about the program. Your communication should reflect a genuine interest in their research and publications. Keep in contact with them throughout the application process.
- 10 MONTHS**
 - Start the online application process to your top-choice schools.
 - Notice the due dates for submitting all application material. **Early submissions are always better as more funding opportunities are available at the beginning.**
- 10 MONTHS**
 - Ask undergraduate professors for letters of recommendation.
 - Attach your Statement of Purpose and resume.
 - Allow 4-6 weeks for professors to respond.
- 7-9 MONTHS**
 - E-mail graduate professors when your application is submitted.



What is the GRE?

- Graduate Record Examination standardized test required by most graduate schools. It is similar to the ACT or SAT tests with timed sessions for quantitative (math), verbal (reading and vocabulary), and writing (essay) sections.
- Go to www.ets.org to schedule a time to take the exam.
- **Cost is \$160**



Funding Opportunities

- To be considered for funding opportunities, graduate schools look for **both high GPA's and GRE scores.**
- *Teaching Assistantships* – teaching/grading undergraduate course labs.
- *Research Assistantships* – working with professors on funded research projects.
- If you are deciding between graduate schools, it's often better to choose the one from which you will receive funding.



More Information

- Geology Majors have access to the Geology Society I-Learn website where you will find specific steps and information about how to:
 - Write a statement of purpose
 - Write your first e-mail to graduate professors
 - Take the GRE

In addition, there are lists of graduate schools related to specific geologic fields, graduate school application checklist, etc.

- Visit the Department of Geology website at www2.byui.edu/Geology