

Self-Study Guide to Grad School: To Go or Not To Go

PRE-READING

Grad school might look like a safe haven when the economy is tough, but you'll find that there's a lot to consider before making this leap: finances, timing, motivation, the application process, job placement rates, and more. Read the article to find out what you need to do to get ready and when you need to do it to make a successful transition from college to graduate and professional school and answer the following questions:

1. How will graduate school impact your marketability to future employers: will grad school help you or hurt you?
2. Is it better to go directly to grad school from your undergraduate program? What do you gain and what do you give up?
3. What questions should you ask grad school and professional representatives at a graduate school fair, a law school forum, and so forth?

POST-READING

Reflect

Write down three reasons why you think you should go to graduate or professional school and three reasons why you should postpone or forego this goal.

Apply

Print out the Graduate School Application Timeline from the article and check off each of the application activities you still need to do.

Extend and Build

Think about faculty and others who might serve as good reference writers for you.

Activity

Select several who can speak positively about your academic and research abilities and the likelihood that you will be successful in graduate school or professional school. Advisers, internship supervisors, job supervisors, and others may say good things about you but probably haven't evaluated you in a situation similar to academic training in graduate school.

- a. Set up an appointment to meet with your potential reference writer
- b. Help your reference help you!
- c. Put together a packet to show him/her that contains:
 - i. Your resume
 - ii. List of schools you are applying to
 - iii. Your future goals
 - iv. A transcript that includes that courses you took from this faculty member with the grade(s) received
 - v. A timeline of dates when the recommendation must be received
 - vi. A stamped envelope to send the confidential reference letter directly to the graduate program. Alternatively, the recommender may be asked to sign the sealed flap of the envelope containing his/her letter and give it to you to send in with your entire application. On the other hand, if the letters of recommendation are to be submitted online, provide your reference the URL and directions for uploading the letter. **Important Note:** Be sure to ask your potential recommender if he/she feels comfortable writing a letter for you!

Note: If you plan to take a year off before applying for graduate or professional school, tell the faculty member your plans and say that you will keep in touch over the year to keep him/her abreast your activities and plans. Be sure to make note of the faculty member's e-mail address.

- vii. Send formal thank-you notes or e-mail to your recommenders to show your appreciation. Keep them apprised of your acceptances or rejections.

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

