



Secrets of Graduate School Admissions

The Princeton Review

800.2Review

www.PrincetonReview.com





Agenda

- Welcome
- Deciding To Go Back to School
- Research
- Finding the Right Graduate School
- Applying and Getting In
- Factors of Admission
- The Princeton Review
- Questions and Answers

TIP: Strategies for Making Yourself a Competitive Applicant



Going Back to School?

- **Undergrad Degree + Masters Degree = More Money**
 - Average lifetime earnings:
 - High school education - \$1.2 million
 - Four-year college degree - \$2.1 million
 - Professional degrees - \$4.4 million.
- **Everybody is Going to Grad School...Why Not Me?**
 - Job market
 - Opportunities to advance?
- **Then Again, Maybe Not Me**
 - Secure Job?



The Pros & Cons of Grad School

- **Reasons to Go**
 - Compete on a level playing field
 - Career advancement
 - Maximize earning potential
 - Want to change your life
 - Opportunities
 - Isn't necessarily obvious

- **Reasons Not to Go**
 - You have a job people would kill for
 - Current loans
 - Giving up multiple year's salary
 - Put your current career on hold
 - Assume substantial debt (tuition, living, etc...)
 - Personal sacrifices (time, family, etc...)



- **Personal Considerations**
 - Many people don't finish graduate school
 - Some leave for personal/medical/family reasons
 - Others leave because of the lifestyle
 - There is often little to no free time
 - It can be hard to meet people and socialize
 - It is hard to make ends meet financially
 - Most schools have very competitive students
- **Sources of Funding**
 - Scholarships/fellowships
 - Private Schools: more likely to find money
 - Larger Public Schools: cheaper tuition, but less funding
 - TAs, RAs, etc.
 - Private jobs
 - Loan forgiveness programs



Choosing a Graduate School: Where Do I Start?

- School websites and materials/publications
 - Mission statement, course listing, professor bios
- **PrincetonReview.com**
 1. **TIP:** Advanced School Search - list of schools that match your needs and preferences
www.princetonreview.com/grad/research/articles/gradschomatch.asp
 2. The Tuition Cost Calculator
- Organizations that administer entrance tests
- Talk to your professors
- Call schools/admissions staff
- Talk to current students & alum
- Go to grad school fairs and conferences
- US News and World Report Rankings



- **TIP: Don't fall for the Brand Name Hype**

- **Choosing a Grad School – 3 Factors**
 1. Academic quality
 2. Chances of getting in
 3. Practical considerations

- **The Academic Fit**
 - Well-suited
 - Specializations



- **What Else to Consider**
 - Rankings
 - Social atmosphere
 - Family factor
 - Career/job offers
 - Cost/Financial Aid
 - Alumni influence/network
 - Environment/location
 - Size
 - Dr. Who?
 - Research facilities
 - School curriculum
 - Visit & talk to the students
 - Judge for yourself



- **The Application Process**
- **TIPS:**
 1. Online applications save time
 2. Small details are important on your applications
- **Commonalities:**
 - Deadlines
 - Rolling admissions/rounds
 - **TIP:** apply early!
 - Application fees
 - Transcripts
 - Resume
 - Letters of Recommendation



Good Questions to Ask

- What is the application window?
- What was the previous class's profile?
- Do you have certain cut-off numbers (tests/GPA)?
- What do you do with multiple test scores?
- What percentage of applicants are accepted?
- How many applications do you see each year?
- Do you offer financial aid?
- Do you offer night/part-time programs?



- **Objective Factors:**

1. GPA
2. Test Scores – GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT
 - Take Your Entrance Test Early
 - Spend time preparing
 - Consider when to prepare

- **The Numbers**

- Students focus on the numbers first
- The numbers don't get you in but _____

ED SCHOOL

AT Vitals

Format	Computer-based test (CBT)
Question Format	Multiple-choice questions; 2 scored essays
Guessing Penalty	None
Test Dates	January 25, 26 April 5, 18, 19 May 10, 23, 27, 31 June 13 July 8, 10, 18 August 5, 7, 15, 22, 26 September 3, 5, 6, 12, 13
Testing Duration	5½ hours
Registration Fee	\$210

AT Information

SECTION	LENGTH	DURATION	SCORE RANGE
Mathematical Sciences	52Q	70 min.	1–15
Verbal Reasoning	40Q	60 min.	1–15
Writing Sample	2 essays	60 min.	J–T
Biological Sciences	52Q	70 min.	1–15
Score Options	1. Score and release 2. Void scores		
Registration	Association of American Medical Colleges 202-828-0690 AAMC.org		

AT Prep Options

- Private Tutoring
- Small Group Tutoring
- Hyperlearning® Classroom Course

B-SCHOOL

GMAT Vitals

Test Format	Computer-adaptive test (CAT)
Question Format	Multiple-choice questions; 2 scored essays
Guessing Penalty	None
Upcoming Test Dates	Most Mondays–Saturdays
Testing Duration	4 hours
Registration Fee	\$250

GMAT Information

SECTION	LENGTH	DURATION	SCORE RANGE
Writing Assessment	2 essays	60 min.	0–6
Quantitative	37Q	75 min.	0–60 raw 200–800 composite
Verbal	41Q	75 min.	0–60 raw 200–800 composite
Score Options	1. Score and release 2. Cancel		
Registration	GMAC–ACT, Inc. 800-717-GMAT (4628) MBA.com		

GMAT Prep Options

- Private Tutoring
- Small Group Tutoring
- Classroom Course
- LiveOnline Course
- Online Tutoring
- Online Course

LAW SCHOOL

LSAT Vitals

Test Format	Scantron with No. 2 pencil
Question Format	Multiple-choice questions; 1 unscored essay
Guessing Penalty	None
2008 Test Dates	February 2 June 16 October 4 December 6
Testing Duration	4 hours
Registration Fee	\$123

LSAT Information

SECTION	LENGTH	DURATION	SCORE RANGE
Logical Reasoning 1	24–26Q	35 min.	120–180 composite
Logical Reasoning 2	24–26Q	35 min.	
Reading Comp.	27–28Q	35 min.	
Analytical Reasoning	23–25Q	35 min.	
Essay	1 essay	35 min.	Unscored
Score Options	1. Score and release 2. Cancel within 9 days		
Registration	Law School Admission Council 215-968-1001 LSAC.org		

LSAT Prep Options

- Private Tutoring
- Small Group Tutoring
- Hyperlearning® Classroom Course
- LSAT Weekender
- LiveOnline Course
- Online Tutoring
- Online Course

GRAD SCHOOL

GRE Vitals

Test Format	Computer-adaptive test (CAT)
Question Format	Multiple-choice questions; 2 scored essays
Guessing Penalty	None
Upcoming Test Dates	Most Mondays–Saturdays
Testing Duration	2½ hours
Registration Fee	\$140

GRE Information

SECTION	LENGTH	DURATION	SCORE RANGE
Writing Assessment	2 essays	75 min.	0–6
Quantitative	28Q	45 min.	200–
Verbal	30Q	30 min.	200–
Score Options	1. Score and release 2. Cancel		
Registration	Educational Testing Serv 800-473-2255 GRE.org		

GRE Prep Options

- Private Tutoring
- Small Group Tutoring
- Classroom Course
- LiveOnline Course
- Online Tutoring
- Online Course

Go to Demo.PrincetonReview.com to take a free practice test and to sample one of our lessons.

Call **800-2Review** (800-273-8439) or visit PrincetonReview.com for more information about The Princeton Review test-prep options.

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Factors of Admission

- **Subjective Factors:**
 1. Recommendations
 2. Personal statement
 3. Activities/experience
 4. Interview
 5. Resume/CV
 6. Personal background/miscellaneous

Stand out from the rest of the crowd.



Letters of Recommendation

- Choose Wisely - Influential part of your application
 - Recommenders are asked to rate abilities, be open-ended, or a combination
- Types of recommendations – usually schools require two or three letters
 - Academic, professional, dean
- Who should you pick?
 - A really prestigious faculty member/the president?
 - Someone who knows you and your work well but isn't well known?
- How should you go about getting one?
 - Approach - make them want to write it
 - Stamped Envelope
 - Bullet point cheat sheet (aka. resume+)
 - Time – extremely important (ASK EARLY)



Letters of Recommendation

- **Five things** that all great teacher letters of recommendation have in common.
 1. Classroom contributions
 2. Interest in the subject
 3. Level of achievement - what sets you apart
 4. Personal anecdotes
 5. Likeability
- What if a recommender asks you to write the letter for them?
- Should you read the letter if offered?
- What if you have trouble finding a recommender?



Personal Statement

- **What To Talk About**
 - What you want to study at graduate school
 - Why you want to study it – your motivation
 - What experience you have in your field
 - What you plan to do with your degree once you have it
- **Evaluate**
 - How clearly you think; how well you have conceptualized your plans and how well your interests and strengths mesh with their program
 - **TIPS: Give Yourself At Least 2 Months To Develop Your Personal Statement**
Get as much feedback and as diverse feedback as possible
 - It should...
 - Be a sales pitch for yourself
 - Show committee something about yourself that they could never learn from your app
 - Demonstrate that you are a mature, intelligent, committed, and focused person
 - Show that you're different from the rest of the pack
 - Be the most powerful, positive element of your application
 - Answer the question!
 - Market it to each school



Personal Statement

- Helpful hints
 - Be yourself and make sure it sounds like you
 - Match it to the rest of your application
 - Think before you write
 - Be as specific as possible
 - Discuss a specific area that you are interested in, why, and what you will do
 - Use active words
 - Use a hook
- Don'ts
 - Don't rely on spellchecker for your righting
 - Don't sound overly arrogant
 - Don't dwell on the negative
 - There are other places for explaining poor scores/grades
 - Don't lie or beg for admission
 - Don't use passive words
 - Don't address the reader



The Rest of The Package

- **Extra-curriculars/work experience/community involvement**
 - **TIP: Don't try to "beef-up" your app by joining every activity you can find**
 - Support what your personal statement talks about
 - Join an organization and gain a leadership position
 - Get an internship – for you and your application
- **The Interview — Do it if They Offer**
 - Prepare before going – what are they likely to ask?
 - Have questions for them and be aware of current issues (but don't look stupid)
- **Resumes**
 - Highlights your academic and professional achievements
 - Mention Golden Key conferences, but get even more involved (fix something)
 - Use active voice and omit things from high school
- **Courses/Study Abroad/Extra Projects**



Presenting Yourself

- **TIP: Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself!**
 - Passion
 - Personal excellence
 - Ambition
 - Empathy
 - Focus
 - Humility
 - Social skills
 - Intellectual curiosity
 - Leadership
 - Research



- **Choosing Targets**

1. Start your list of universities that offer the program you're interested in.
2. Eliminate - not academically strong enough or unacceptable due to practical considerations.

- **FAQs**

- **How many schools should I apply to?**
 - **Should I apply to schools that I think are out of my league (my GPA or test score might be too low)?**
3. Divide the remaining schools into three groups: 1-2-1 Ratio
 - 100% sure/shoe-ins
 - Good “match”
 - Schools you'll get into only by a miracle



Application Timeline

- **TIP: Make a Plan-of-Action Calendar & Stick to It. Don't Miss Deadlines!**
- **Junior Year** (or one-and-a-half years prior to entering grad school)
 - **January-March**
 - You should be deciding that grad school is the right choice for you and thinking about the qualities that you need in a graduate degree program
 - Begin your research, familiarizing yourself with schools, grad school life, and the ins and outs of the application process. The Advanced Graduate School Search is a good place to start identifying specific schools.
 - Start talking to professors in your field
 - Start thinking about who might recommend you
 - Find out which entrance exams are required for admission
 - **April-May**
 - Take a practice test. Your score will help you determine how much preparation you'll need for the real deal.
 - Sign up for a course, or at the very least, start studying on your own with our *Cracking* series.
 - **June-July**
 - Register for the GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT/etc.
 - If you're not already sure, research and decide what your specific area of concentration will be within your field. This will help you pick a program.
 - Create a starting list of target grad schools and request literature from schools you're considering
 - Continue to prepare for the entrance exam.



Application Timeline

- **Senior Year** (year prior to entering grad school)
 - **August (or earlier)**
 - Take your entrance exam
 - Begin your personal statement
 - Start to narrow down your list of target grad schools
 - Start talking to professionals in your prospective field to learn more about what it's really like to do this work
 - Talk seriously to professors who might recommend you
 - **September**
 - Take your entrance exam
 - Finalize your choices of target schools
 - Look into merit-based grants and fellowships as possible ways to help finance your education
 - Keep polishing your statement of purpose
 - Send recommenders appropriate forms, version of your personal statement, resume, and stamped-and-addressed envelopes
 - **October**
 - Complete your applications online - it's quicker and easier. If you're doing any applications on paper, get a hold of these hard copies now.
 - Request official transcripts, paying careful attention to where they should go
 - Continue working on your personal statement
 - Have someone knowledgeable in your field critique your personal statement and then start revising.
 - Have your scores sent to all the schools you're applying to. If you're not happy with them, register to take the test again.
 - **November**
 - Refine your personal statement, tailoring it for different schools as necessary
 - Tie up any other loose ends
 - Complete and submit all applications, keeping two copies of every part for your records
 - **December-January...**
 - Start focusing on financial aid. Fill out the FAFSA online - to qualify, complete the FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible.
 - **February until...**
 - Try to relax while you wait it out. This'll probably be the most relaxing time you'll have for the next several years, so enjoy it!



Raising Your Test Scores - FAQs

- When should the tests be taken?
- How many times can students retake the tests, and is there a downside?
- What is the best way to prepare for these tests?
- How can students evaluate their test scores and see how they measure up in comparison to other test-takers?
- How do you succeed on these exams?
 - Knowledge (Content)
 - Strategy
 - Method
 - Practice & Analysis
 - Confidence
- How important is it to prepare for these tests?



About The Princeton Review

- Since 1981, The Princeton Review has helped students, parents, and educators deal responsibly with the increasingly competitive and complex process of admissions to colleges and graduate school.
- The Princeton Review courses and tutors provide the most personal and effective ways to prepare for standardized tests, including the MCAT, DAT, OAT, LSAT, GRE and GMAT.
 - The Princeton Review has more than 1,000 locations throughout the United States, and an outstanding track record with guaranteed score improvements.*
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About The Princeton Review

Why The Princeton Review?

- **Results.** Our students end up scoring higher on the actual exams after preparing with us and consistently get into their top-choice programs.
- **Instructors.** Top instructors who undergo intensive training and are engaging, energetic and enthusiastic about the test they are preparing you for.
- **Materials.** We spend millions of dollars in R&D to make sure you receive the most up-to-date material, whether it's through printed material, online tools or practice exams.



Questions?

Thank You

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