

## Grad School Application Timeline from the Princeton Review

If you're planning to apply to graduate school, it's best to start early.

Applications for PhD programs are typically between mid-November and early January. The most common deadline is December 1. Deadlines for master's programs tend to hit in January, February or March. No matter which degree you pursue, starting early will give you more time to prepare and polish your application.

Some graduate programs have rolling admissions. Applying earlier can increase your odds of being admitted to these programs because applications are evaluated as they arrive (rather than all at once).

Here's a sample schedule for a student hoping to enter grad school in the fall. This is a best-case scenario, which leaves time to craft a great application, resolve unforeseen problems (a lost transcript, a delinquent recommender) and submit with time to spare. Of course, you'll need to tweak this schedule to fit your schools' deadlines.

**May**: Begin researching potential schools. Take a practice GRE test. Your score will help you determine how much preparation you'll need for the real deal.

**June**: If your practice scores weren't too hot, sign up for a GRE test preparation course. Register for the GRE general test if necessary.

**July**: Request information from schools that interest you. Meet up with a few current and former professors. They can recommend good programs and may even help you make some connections.

**August**: Take the GRE general test. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again. Begin writing your statement of purpose.

**September**: Register for the November GRE subject test (if necessary). Finalize your list of prospective schools, and pick a professor or two from each whose research interests mirror your own. Familiarize yourself with their work. Contact your recommenders. Keep polishing your statement of purpose.

**October**: Request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution. Send your recommenders supplemental materials (like your resume, personal statement, etc.) that they can use as a reference. Make contact with students and professors at your prospective schools. Arrange a campus visit if you can.

**November**: Have someone in the field and a few smart (and honest) friends read over your personal statement. Take the GRE subject test; make sure that your scores will be sent directly to schools.

**November and December**: Complete and submit all applications, keeping two copies of every section for your records. Verify that your recommendations have been sent.

**January:** Focus on financial aid—fill out the FAFSA online and look into private loans, grants and fellowships.

**January through March:** Receive invitations to interview at programs that require interviews. Attend interviews. Wait for decisions. Try to relax while you wait it out. This will probably be the most relaxing time you'll have for the next several years, so enjoy it.

**April:** Celebrate your acceptances. Appeal the aid package (or apply for alternative loans) if the amount the school offers you doesn't meet your needs.

<http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/application-timeline.aspx>