APPLICATION TO GRADUATE SCHOOLS

1. DECIDING THE GRADUATE PROGRAM:

(a) Check the US News website to learn the latest rankings of graduate programs that you would like to apply for. See [http://www.usnews.com/education](http://www.usnews.com/education).

(b) Find and talk to someone who had a prior experience in graduate application procedures and listen to their suggestions.

(c) Search the location of the graduate program that you are interested in and try to be familiar with its general characteristics like its culture, population, climate, transportation, and living conditions.

(d) You can check the Craigslist website to have an idea about the possible living expenses of a graduate student. Check [http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites](http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites). Try to learn average rents for accommodation and second-hand car prices.

(e) Even though some universities are not much transparent about the stipends and scholarships they provide, try to contact with a graduate student prior to application to know how they make ends meet.

(f) Send e-mails to the admissions offices for further information. Most of the time, they would provide you with detailed information about the student life in their universities.

(g) You may contact with the faculty of the department you wish to apply for. However, you should keep in mind that they may never reply your e-mails since everyday they get hundreds of similar e-mails from people like you. However, you should take your chance and try, though.

(h) Make a list of your preferred universities. Rank them according to your criteria. If you are planning to apply to 10 Graduate Programs, for instance, pick the first three from the top 20, choose next 5 from the range 20-80, and let the last two be your rescuer. The number of schools to be applied for can significantly change from person to person. However, remember that applying graduate schools is not free. Every school you apply for would cost you much or less.

2. COST OF APPLYING TO A GRADUATE SCHOOL:

(a) Typically, application fees range between 50 and 150 Dollars. These fees are non-refundable, that is, you are not paid back even if you are refused.

(b) The TOEFL, GRE and GMAT cost 185, 150 and 250 Dollars respectively. Sending each additional score to any graduate school cost 25-50 Dollars.

(c) Most universities accept online applications, however, you also take posting and shipping costs of your application materials into consideration in case that the university you want to apply for requires hard copies of your application documents.

(d) Last but not least, most universities require an approved English translation of your diplomas and transcripts, so you may need to pay for notary transactions and translations.
3. REQUIRED EXAMS:

(a) You need to take TOEFL and GRE/GMAT exams. To learn the details about the TOEFL exam, see the ETS webpage, which can be accessed at \text{http://www.ets.org/toefl}. For GRE, please go to \text{http://www.ets.org/gre}, and for GMAT, go to \text{http://www.mba.com/us}.

(b) It would be useful to take the mentioned exams a couple of months prior to deadlines. This would give you enough flexibility to retake the exams if necessary.

(c) Nevertheless, you also need to make sure that you feel totally ready for the exam before you take it, otherwise you would do nothing but waste your money.

(d) Even though the basic requirements change from one university to another, typically, you should get at least 83 from the TOEFL IBT, over 500 from the GMAT (Verbal+Quantitative) and minimum 300 (Verbal+Quantitative). For the GRE and GMAT exams, most universities also require to get 3.5 out of 6 from analytical writing section.

4. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS: Though the application documents by and large vary depending on the graduate school, there are some essential documents you need to prepare no matter which graduate school you are thinking to apply. These are;

- Statement of Purpose (SOP),
- Letters of Reference (Recommendation),
- Resume,
- Previous Diplomas and Transcripts (Translated and Approved by the Notary),
- TOEFL and GRE/GMAT scores,
- Application Form (Electronic or hard copy),
- Application Fee.

5. WRITING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (SOP):

(a) SOP is the most important application document you are going to prepare. You should pay extra attention to be clear while writing SOP. You need to spend relatively longer time on SOP than any other document to make sure that it effectively and sincerely expresses your intention to become a graduate student.

(b) Do not keep it too short and do not keep it too long. Usually 2 pages would be enough.

(c) Please keep in mind that there may be hundreds of students applying to the same program, and the application committee would have to go over each of them, a couple of times at best. Yours should be original and catchy. Do your best to express yourself well. You need to be specific and honest about your purpose and you are expected to convince the application committee.

(d) Ask people to review your work for grammatical errors, coherence and punctuation. If you are already at the US, there might be free writing center that you can take advantage. Use an official and academic language. Read your SOP carefully at least five times before you submit it.

(e) If you wonder how to write an effective SOP, you can check the following website: \text{http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/statement-of-purpose.aspx}

(f) In general, what you need to do is to try to answer these three basic questions:

- What is your purpose of applying to graduate school?
• Why specifically this program?
• Why this university and why not others?

(g) As a rule of thumb, you need to prepare distinct SOPs for each university you want to apply. This means that if you want to apply to 10 universities, you need to customize 10 SOPs.

6. LETTER OF REFERENCE (LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION):

(a) Letters of Reference is not something you write, it should be written by a faculty or a manager.

(b) Generally, graduate schools require you to submit at least 3, at most 4 letters of reference (or letters of recommendation) from different faculties or managers. Most of them accept electronic letters, however there are some universities that still require hard copies.

(c) If you are expected an electronic copy, what you need to do is to provide the university with the email addresses of the faculty/managers. The university would send an automatic email to the faculty/manager you specified, asking them to email a letter of reference for you. Therefore, make sure that you let the faculty/manager know about the situation in advance and allow them enough time to write your letters.

(d) When you are requesting a reference letter, try to give as much information about yourself as possible, such as classes you have taken from the professor, your grades from the class, title and brief explanation of project you completed in the class, if there is any. In addition, attach your transcript, TOEFL, GRE, and GMAT scores as well.

(e) In most cases, they may have difficulty in remembering you or they may be busy to write one, so they may ask you to prepare a draft and send them to make their job easier. So be ready to write.

(f) Similar to SOP, a specific letter is better than a general one. Therefore, do not copy and paste readily available letters on the Internet. Rather, try to be specific about yourself. No question that it is very difficult to evaluate yourself as if pretending you are somebody else, but do your best, though. In turn, nobody would care yourself more than you.

(g) While writing the draft, try to give quantitative measures to demonstrate how well you did your job in your previous education, such as GPA, your ranking, etc. If your faculty/advisor tell you they will write it for you, make sure to remind them to be specific about you. Specifying your grades, GPA, rankings etc. in the email would help them a lot.

(h) If you are expected to submit 3 letters of recommendation, for instance, one should be written by a faculty from you undergraduate program, one or two should be from your masters degree. If you have a work experience in the related area, your boss can also write a letter of recommendation for you. If you do not have a masters degree, you can submit three letters from your undergraduate program.

(i) You can check the following website to see example letters and details https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingrecommendationletteronline/node/154.

7. RESUME:

(a) There is nothing much to say about resume. You can find resume templates at http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/career-development/put-your-qualifications-writing/resume-formats
(b) Do your best to reflect best yourself in your resume.

8. INTERVIEW:

(a) If you are lucky enough, a faculty from the graduate school you applied would send you an email to arrange an online interview. So, you also need to prepare yourself for a 30 minutes interview.

(b) You are expected to have a professional look. Before the interview:
   - men-have a nice haircut, and shave,
   - women-go to a beauty salon, have a light make-up (do not exaggerate)
   - both men and women-dress somewhat formal clothes (preferably business professional, at least business casual).

(c) Pay special attention to conduct the interview in a silent place.

(d) For generally asked interview questions. You can see [http://www.uwgb.edu/careers/skills/interviewing-graduate-school.asp](http://www.uwgb.edu/careers/skills/interviewing-graduate-school.asp).

(e) You can also watch videos on Youtube about how to get prepared for an interview.

(f) Practice as much as you can.

(g) Videotape yourself and watch to improve your interview skills. It would help a lot.

9. TIME LINE: Timeline for Graduate School Applications (Example)

- March 1, 2014 - Deadline for application
- February 15, 2014 - Double check that you completed all your applications
- February 1, 2014 - retake the GRE/GMAT exam if necessary
- January 15, 2014 - retake the TOEFL exam if necessary
- January 1, 2014 - take the GRE and/or GMAT exam
- December 15, 2013 - take the TOEFL exam
- October 1, 2013 - Begin to write SOPs and letters of references
- September 1, 2013, Prepare a study plan for the exams and start studying
- August 2013 - Program Search- Decide the schools you want to apply
- July 2013 - Have your diplomas and transcripts copied and translated into English, and get them approved by the Notary