

“If you **STILL** want to go to  
graduate school...”

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Steps to a successful application

# Will you be admitted?

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- ◆ GRE score
- ◆ GPA
- ◆ Letters of recommendation
- ◆ Demonstrated research skill
- ◆ Personal statement
- ◆ Fit

# TOP TWENTY FACTORS IN GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

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Patricia Keith-Spiegel conducted a survey of 158 faculty active in the graduate student selection process. They were told that it was assumed that grades, test scores, and letters of recommendations were important and asked to rate 138 more subtle factors. The following include the twenty factors rated most highly.

1. Senior author of a research article published in a refereed scholarly journal.
2. Sole author on a paper at APA, APS or a major regional association convention.
3. Letter from a mentor with whom applicant has done considerable work.
4. Letter from applicant's professor who is a well-known and respected psychologist.
5. Personal statement reveals a sustained and focused interest in an area appropriate to your program.

# TOP TWENTY FACTORS IN GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

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6. Junior authorship on a research article published in a refereed scholarly journal.
7. In the top 5% of the graduating class (overall GPA standing).
8. Applicant writes very well
9. Includes a research paper (independent study project) in submitted application package that is relevant to your program focus.
10. Application materials indicate that considerable attention paid to assessing a “match” (i.e. applicant’s interests and your program seem right for each other).
11. Sole author of a paper presented at an undergraduate research conference.
12. Research assistant as an undergraduate.

# TOP TWENTY FACTORS IN GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

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13. Applicant is a “self-starter” (according to recommendation).
14. Junior author of paper at APA, APS or a large regional association convention.
15. Won a departmental award in a research paper competition.
16. Highly motivated to achieve (according to recommendation).
17. Participated in invited honors program us senior year.
18. Earned an “A” in required upper division statistics class.
19. Applicant is responsible and dependable (according to recommendation).
20. Holds a membership in Phi Beta Kappa or Sigma XI (or other prestigious scholarship group).

# Timetable

## Before senior year

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### ◆ Spring of junior year

- Consider type of program
- Talk with faculty
- Participate in research
- Take methods course (if have not already)

### ◆ Summer before senior year

- Look over *Graduate Study in Psychology*
- make rough list of schools
- Start writing personal statement
- Begin study for GRE

# Timetable

## Senior year

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### ◆ Fall semester

- Write for school info
- Start making final list
- Continue studying for GRE
- OCTOBER: Take GRE
- Near end of semester, ask for letters of recommendation

### ◆ After the fall semester

- Ask for application money for Xmas!
- Meet DEADLINES!
- Visit the schools
- Pray for acceptances
- Make phone calls
- DECIDE!!! (April 15th is the APA deadline)

# The final list of schools

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- ◆ More is better! (Increase you odds)
  - 12 is a good number
- ◆ Use three-tiered approach
  - Top-tier dream schools (20%)
  - Middle-tier good schools (60%)
  - Bottom-tier safety-net schools (20%)
- ◆ Estimate \$30/school application cost

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# Letters of recommendation

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- ◆ Make certain some professors know you well
- ◆ Aid letter writer
  - Provide bio
  - Detail why you should get a good letter
  - Provide stamped, addressed envelopes
    - ◆ Put forms to be filled out in appropriate envelope
    - ◆ Fill out all info on form that you can

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# Choosing a list of schools

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- ◆ Geographical limitations
  - *Everyone* wants to move to L.A.
- ◆ Cost
- ◆ Prestige (GRE requirements)
- ◆ Course requirements

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# Personal statement

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- ◆ Be specific
  - “I like psychology”, “I want to help people”
- ◆ Tailor you letter to the program
  - Identify key faculty
  - Identify perceived program strengths
- ◆ Keep it neat and short
  - 2-3 pages typed
- ◆ Solicit comments

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# Programs to consider

(MA, MS, Med, MSW, PhD, PsyD, EdD)

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- ◆ Clinical psychology
- ◆ Counseling psychology
- ◆ Forensic psychology
- ◆ Health psychology
- ◆ I/O psychology
- ◆ Sports psychology
- ◆ Academia (any area)
- ◆ Educational psychology
- ◆ School psychology
- ◆ School counselor
- ◆ Social work

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# Don't forget to laugh

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**Graduate Admissions Committee  
Department of Psychology  
Big Deal University  
Collegeville, USA**

**Dear Committee Members:**

**Thanks for your letter of March 30. After careful consideration, I regret to inform you that I am unable to accept your rejection at this time.**

**This year I have been particularly fortunate in receiving an unusually large number of rejection letters. With such a varied and promising field of schools, it is impossible for me to accept all refusals.**

**Despite your outstanding record and previous experience in rejecting applicants, I find that your rejection does not meet my current career needs.**

**Consequently, I will begin taking classes as a graduate student in your department this August. I look forward to seeing you then.**

**Best of luck in rejecting future applicants.**

**Sincerely Yours,  
[Name Withheld]**

# Keep laughing when you get there...

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## **The Top Ten Lies Told by Graduate Students**

(taken from the Harvard Crimson)

10. It doesn't bother me at all that my college roommate is making \$80,000 a year on Wall Street.
9. I'd be delighted to proofread your book/chapter/article.
8. My work has a lot of practical importance.
7. I would never date an undergraduate.
6. Your latest article was so inspiring.
5. I turned down a lot of great job offers to come here.
4. I just have one more book to read and then I'll start writing.
3. The department is giving me so much support.
2. My job prospects look really good.
1. No really, I'll be out of here in only two more years.

# Your professor is your friend...

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**A grad student, a post-doc, and a professor are walking through a city park and they find an antique oil lamp. They rub it and a Genie comes out in a puff of smoke.**

**The Genie says, "I usually only grant three wishes, so I'll give each of you just one."**

**"Me first! Me first!" says the grad student. "I want to be in the Bahamas, driving a speedboat with a gorgeous woman who sunbathes topless." Poof! He's gone.**

**"Me next! Me next!" says the post-doc. "I want to be in Hawaii, relaxing on the beach with a professional hula dancer on one side and a Mai Tai on the other." Poof! He's gone.**

**"You're next," the Genie says to the professor.**

**The professor says, "I want those guys back in the lab after lunch."**