

Applying to Graduate School in Psychology

Different Kinds of Graduate Programs

- Clinical
 - Meant for clinical therapists
 - Usually people who want to practice therapy in some way
 - Licensing
 - Usually PhD only
- Psychology – general
 - More research based
 - Usually end up in academic or policy/field work
 - Masters or PhD can work in fields
- Counseling
 - Meant for people who want to practice
 - Less assessment, more therapy techniques
 - Masters or PhD can practice
- School Psychology
 - Work in schools with students who need IEP's or extra individualized plans
 - Masters needed to practice

Rough Timeline

- Summer:
 - Work on personal statement
 - Take the GRE
 - Make long list of schools
 - Update your CV
- August-September
 - Shorten your list
 - Contact potential advisors
 - Ask for Letters of Recommendation
- September-October
 - Contact Recommenders
- October-November
 - Send transcripts
 - Send GRE scores
 - Work on the application

Get the Perfect CV

- College stuff only- no High School!
- Education background including college GPA
- List any research experience you have
- Any other **applicable** activities you have done
- Any publications or presentations (even for College research fairs) in APA format
- Have lots of people read it
- Save it as something logical! (ie. Tavassolie CV)

The (Infamous) Personal Statement

- Sell yourself, tell a story (but don't tell your personal life saga...)
- Good resource: <http://www.apa.org/education/grad/applying.aspx>
- Make sure to address what you can do for them, what can you bring to the table
- Talk about your research experience
- General first, then specify based on professor and specific interests
- Have MANY people read it!

Making your initial list of schools

- Long list- 25-30 schools
- Shorten this list based on when you hear back from professors, or as you further your research into the programs
- Try not to limit based on geography and be open-minded
- Start reading abstracts to get a sense of their research focus
- Be organized! (make excel sheets that track your applications, due dates, log in information, etc)
- Diversify your list (make sure you have a variety of PhD, MA, EdD, etc. programs)

Taking the GRE

- Create an account at <http://www.ets.org/gre>
 - Can sign up for it any time, offered 2-3 times per day
- Take a study course if possible- they have different options based on your financial situation <http://www.kaptest.com/>
- Study for about 2-3 months before the test
- Details about the test: Computer based, you'll have a calculator on screen
- Factor in the Cost of taking the test and sending your scores!
- Do you need to take the Psych GRE? If you are clinical... YES

Letters of Recommendation

- Need 3 recommenders
- At least one Professor you have had, bosses are okay
- Someone who knows you as a good researcher
- When contacting them to write the letter make sure to send them:
 - Your list of schools; exactly how to upload the letter (if paper submission: give envelopes addressed with postage); DEADLINES
 - Your transcript
 - CV
 - Personal Statement
 - Short description of the programs/what you are interested in

Contacting Potential Advisors

- Make sure to do this early (September)
- In this contact email:
 - Who you are
 - What you are doing and have done
 - Why you are interested in their work
 - Ask if they are taking students
 - Attach CV

- But be aware that they may not know their schedule in terms of funding, etc. about the following fall, but it's good that you reached out anyway...now they know your name!

The Actual Application

- Every school is different
- Factor in the cost of sending each application (usually ranges from \$50-100 each)
- Make sure to request your GRE scores and transcripts early!
- If you have multiple transcripts:
 - Each school is different with the types of transcripts they want (some only from colleges you have a degree in, some want them all; some want official transcripts, others want unofficial)
- Your deadline is not your recommender's deadline: **Make YOUR deadline Thanksgiving weekend!**
- Do you need a writing sample? Make sure it's a research-focused piece of writing.
- Supplemental essays?

The Response Timeline

- Most applications are due around December – January
- Interview invites arrive from late December – Late February
- First round of interviews is around mid-January (for phone and/or skype interviews)
- Interview Days are in February and early March
- You hear back in March and April
- **Deadline to decide: April 15**

Skype/Phone Interviews

- Factor in time zone changes!
- Dress appropriately (remember, they CAN see you in Skype interviews)
- Have questions prepared
- Take advantage of not being there in person (have your computer open to notes, write questions down before hand, have your 2 minute intro 'about you' spiel in front of you!)
- Send thank you emails afterwards!

In-Person Interview Days

- Factor in the cost of attending (flights, cabs, hotels?)
- Dress is business attire/business casual
- Who will you talk to? Make sure you are prepared to talk with professors, students, and administrators – get to know their bios, stalk them online a little
- Make sure you have questions, both specific and general
- Take notes after every interview
- Send thank you emails!
- What to bring:
 - Few copies of CV
 - Print out of your questions
 - Any publications or posters (bring one copy)
 - Brief description of each faculty member in the department
 - A few papers by your potential advisor
 - Water and snack (granola bars)

- *And if you really want to be prepared:* tissues, shout wipes/tide-to-go, Advil, mints, pocket mirror, floss

During the Interview Day

- Meeting the grad students
 - Prepare specific questions (how big is the cohort, years to graduation, relationship with advisor, etc.)
 - Be social but act appropriately (i.e. don't be the drunkest person there!)
 - Small talk sucks, prepare for it
- You might have a dinner at your potential mentor's house, be prepared for it!
- Don't gossip about past experiences and definitely not about other programs and advisors you've met (this is KEY, this world is small, everyone knows everyone else)
- Be friendly with the other applicants

When you hear back

- Don't hold on to multiple offers (i.e. if you hear back from two schools in the same week, and you know that you would definitely choose School A over School B, don't waste any time, tell School B immediately that you decline, again, do so respectfully)
- Use one (better) offer as bait for the school you really want to go to- EVERYTHING IS NEGOCIABLE
- What can you ask when you get an offer?
 - Funding (how much and how many years guaranteed)
 - Publication opportunities (1st author?)
 - Conference travel funding
 - Specific project trajectory plans
 - Size of incoming cohort
- When you decide:
 - It's okay to tell the schools you reject where you are going (email is fine for this)
 - Always be respectful- you will see all these people again!

Additional Resources

- Mitch's Guide to Applying to Clinical Graduate School:<http://www.unc.edu/~mjp1970/Mitch's%20Grad%20School%20Advice.pdf>
- APA Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Psychology