Important Questions to Ask:

- Why? How is this going to help me?
- What are my goals?
- Are those goals realistic?
- Is a graduate degree needed for my career goal(s)?
- Would a couple of years of real work experience do as well or better?
- Should I work for a year and then go into a grad program? (Some programs require work experience)
- Am I willing to commit the time, money, energy?
- How will a grad degree improve my employment options and earning power?
- Am I just stalling?

Self-Check:

- Motivated to succeed?
- Are you willing to move to a new location?
- Is the location of the school suitable for you?
  - Big city vs. small or rural area
- Can you afford it?
  - Are assistantships or financial assistance available?
  - If not, are you willing to take out student loans?
- Do you have a serious boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse?
  - How will this affect that relationship?
    - Are you going to have to move?
    - Your earning power
    - Time commitment

Types of Graduate or Professional Programs:

- Masters degree
- MBA – Master of Business Administration
- Doctoral (PhD) degree
- Law – Juris Doctorate or Masters in Legal Studies (SIUC)
- Medical (human)
- Dentistry
- Veterinary

Checking Out Programs:

- What schools offer the program you want -
  - Peterson’s Guide- [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
  - Princeton Review (online)
    - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
What are the Admission Criteria?:

- Admissions may be based on:
  - Application: Make sure it is complete and easy to read
  - Resume or vita
  - GPA – many grad programs have an established GPA
  - Transcripts – be sure you submit them as instructed
  - Standardized test scores
  - Recommendation letters
  - Admission essay or personal statement

Personal Statements/Essays – Why?:

- Your opportunity to stand out.
- Be sure you are addressing the assigned questions/topic.
- If the topic isn’t assigned, be sure you are still constructing an essay that is relevant and informative.
- Demonstrates your writing skills. Make sure your statements is well-organized, easy to read.
- Take care of the details – no typos, misspellings, appropriate punctuation.
- Demonstrate critical thinking, analytical skills.

Good Questions to Ask Faculty:

- How many faculty are in the program?
- What are their research interests and publications?
- Philosophy, goals, values, etc. of the department/faculty?
- What is the student to teacher ratio?
- How available are faculty to students?
- Are students assigned to an advisor or do they choose one?
- What is the attrition rate?
- Why do students leave the program?

Good Questions to Ask – Type/Quality of Program:

- How much emphasis is on research, teaching, professional experience?
- Is the program accredited? What is the curriculum?
- Can you go part-time/full-time?
- Are there research, internship or practicum requirements?
• Are there professors there willing to back your research interests?
• Thesis or research paper or project required?
• What are the standards and requirements for admission? – exams, application deadlines, application process.

**Good Questions to Ask Students**
• Many of the same questions you would ask faculty:
  o Number of students/faculty in program?
  o How available is your advisor/professors?
  o How well prepared do you feel for exams/prelims?
  o How long have you been in the program?
  o What do you wish you would have known before entering the program?
  o Are there assistantships available?
  o How does the dept. prepare you for being a teaching or research assistant?
  o What is the workload associated with an assistantship?
  o Why do students leave the program?

**How is Graduate School Different?**
• Your attitude – burden for success is on you.
• Fewer actual assignments; fewer hard/fast deadlines.
• Motivation - be motivated to push yourself to become *an expert in some specific area of a discipline*.
• You do not simply sit in class, listen to lecture, and take exams
• You are expected to build relationships with professors and peers
• Smaller class sizes
• More participation in class is expected, e.g., discussions
• Highly competitive (fewer students are admitted)
• Best qualified are admitted
• Independent research may be required, the basis for the student’s thesis or dissertation
• Supervised work experience in the field is expected
• You’ll be working – probably without pay
• Limited amount of time to finish the program.

**Application Process:**
• Deadlines to apply
  o Typically Oct/Nov/Dec for fall entrance
• Start checking out schools/application process by September of senior year
  o Graduate/Professional school fairs
  o Online
  o Calling the programs
o Graduate program coordinator/advisor
o Professors with research experience or expertise matching your interests

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Application:
• Plan on applying to 5 or 6 schools/programs
• As part of the application “packet” you send, expect to include or have sent:
  o Exam scores – make sure you have taken the needed exam –
    ▪ GRE – general – science, match, English – etc.
    ▪ GMAT – business
    ▪ MCAT – medical
    ▪ LSAT – law school
  o Resume
  o The school’s application form
  o Transcripts
  o References (written to their program)
  o Statement of Purpose or Statement of Interest
    ▪ Why you want to go to graduate school
    ▪ Your area(s) of interest for research and/or specific study
    ▪ Professional goals