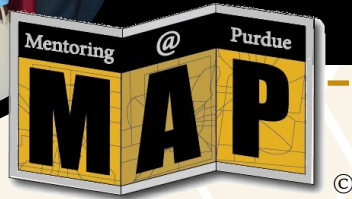




Mentoring @ Purdue



**M@P-ing Out
Your Future**

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY®



About This Plan

So You Want To Go To Grad School!

Applying to grad school can be a daunting process—deadlines, paperwork, grades, letters—there is so much to keep track of! This guide is designed to help you successfully navigate the graduate school application process—and even better, to help you *stay* successful once you arrive on your new campus.

Here are the sections you will find in this guide:

About This Guide.....	3
Chapter 1: Timeline for Success.....	5
Chapter 2: Undergraduate Plan of Study Tracker	8
Chapter 3: Taking the GRE.....	13
Chapter 4: Questions to Consider When Choosing a Grad Program.....	24
Chapter 5: Graduate School Comparison Worksheet.....	26
Chapter 6: Deadline Tracker.....	29
Chapter 7: Statement of Purpose.....	30
Chapter 8: Letters of Recommendation	31
Chapter 9: Applying for Internships.....	36
Chapter 10: Approaching a New Faculty Member.....	38
Chapter 11: Following Up with Faculty	40
Chapter 12: Funding Opportunities.....	42
About the Mentoring@Purdue Summer Scholars Program	45

Whether you come study with us at Purdue University or choose another program, we want you to be successful, as an undergraduate, a graduate student, and a young professional. Feel free to reach out to us at MAP@asec.purdue.edu if you have any questions as you fill out your application.

Good luck, future graduate student!



About This Guide

The Mentoring@Purdue Resource Guide was written to assist undergraduate students in the graduate school application process. Dottie Vollmer, who earned a Purdue master's degree, wrote and compiled this guide with the help and guidance of Drs. Levon T. Esters and Neil Knobloch, faculty in the Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication. Jessica Merzdorf, who earned a Purdue master's degree, edited the publication as a student.

A report from the National Science Foundation discovered that 21 of the top 50 institutions for educating underrepresented minority graduates who pursue further graduate education are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Fiegenger & Proudfoot 2013). While students are continuing their education after obtaining an undergraduate degree, not all are prepared for graduate school coursework, research, or even the application process. This guide is meant to help students prepare for their graduate career earlier in their undergraduate years. By beginning early, students are more likely to succeed.



Author: Dottie Vollmer



Editor: Jessica Merzdorf

This guide chronologically outlines the graduate school application process from finding letter of recommendation writers to taking the GRE, from approaching potential faculty to taking an internship. While every student's educational journey is different, this guide is meant to provide a starting point as well as important check-in points to consider when deciding to continue to graduate school.

This guide was developed under the Recruiting Underrepresented Minority Graduate Students in the Agricultural Sciences through Partnerships with 1890 Land-Grant Institutions and completed as part of the Mentoring@Purdue (M@P) program at Purdue University. The USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Grant Program (WAMS), supported this work. Accession Number: 1010640.

Reference

Fiegener, M.K. & Proudfoot S.L. (2013). Baccalaureate origins of U.S.-trained S&E doctorate recipients. *National Science Foundation Info Brief*, 13-323.



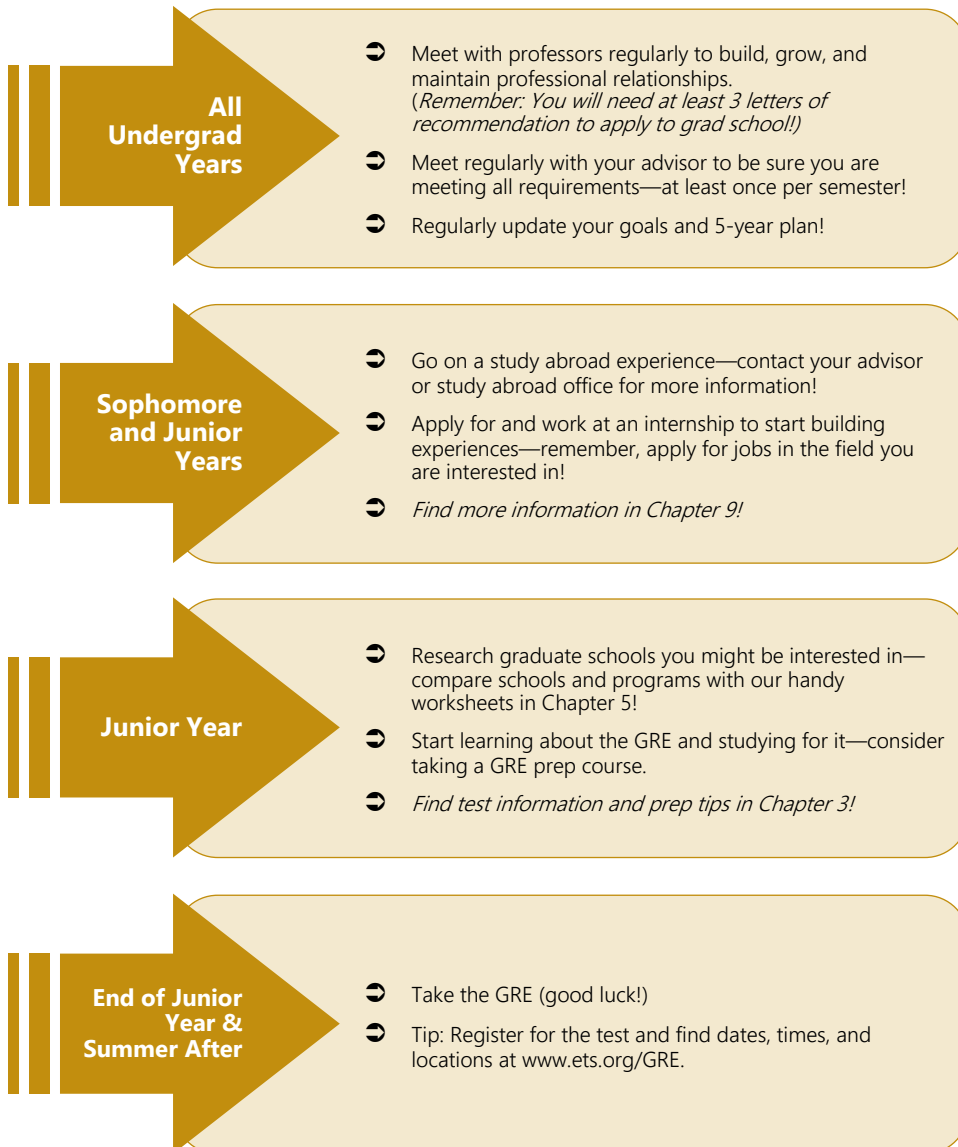
2017-18 Mentoring@Purdue Leadership Team

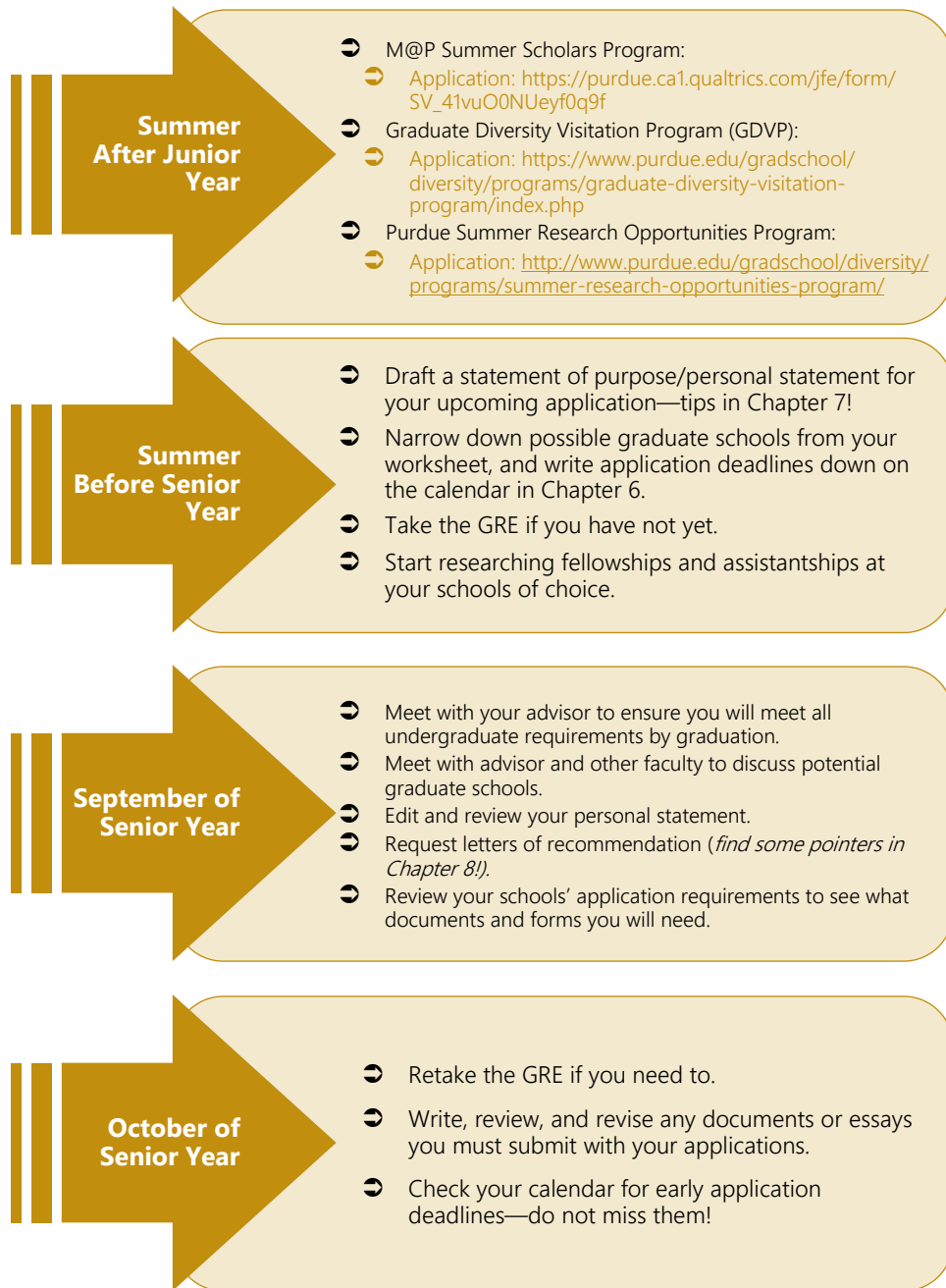
Chapter 1

Timeline for Success



Preparing for graduate school is not something you save for your senior year. Getting a strong start from Day 1 will boost your chances of getting into grad school and being successful while you are there.







November of Senior Year

- Follow up with your letter of recommendation writers—courteously remind those who are late, and thank those who have submitted their letters.
- Submit transcript requests to the Registrar’s Office for programs with early deadlines (but wait until your fall grades are released for the others).
- Submit applications with December or January deadlines.

January of Senior Year

- Complete and submit applications with later deadlines (March is usually the latest).
- Start filling out your FAFSA for fall at www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

February/ March of Senior Year

- You will start receiving your acceptance, waitlist, and rejection letters soon!
- If possible, wait until you have heard from all schools before making your final decision.
- You may also be invited to interview with some programs. In addition to helping faculty determine whether they will admit you, they allow you to learn more about the program and talk with potential future faculty.

April/May of Senior Year

- You have probably heard from all your schools and are ready to make your final choice—congratulations!

Chapter 2

Undergraduate Plan of Study Tracker



Finishing your undergraduate degree in four years not only saves you time, it also saves you money!

Work with your academic advisor as soon as you are admitted to find out what courses your major requires and what electives you will take. By staying on top of your course lists, you set yourself up for success!

Use the tables on the following pages to map out your undergraduate plan of study and fill in all of your required courses before graduation.

“I would encourage all students to complete their undergraduate degrees in four years if possible. Colleges and universities offer a number of academic support programs and services to help students matriculate in a timely manner, and with support and dedication, a four-year degree is almost always achievable.”

-Dr. Levon Esters, M@P Program Co-Director



“Consider your education to be a journey, not a destination. Set goals. Work to achieve your goals. But, don’t lose sight of the bigger picture. You are on a journey and your future is being scripted by what you do today.”

-Dr. Neil Knobloch, M@P Program Co-Director



Freshman				
Year:	Semester	Fall	Spring	Summer
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			





Sophomore				
Year:	Semester	Fall	Spring	Summer
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			





Junior		Fall	Spring	Summer
Year:	Semester			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			
	Class			





Senior				
Year:	Semester	Fall	Spring	Summer
Class				
Class				
Class				
Class				
Class				
Class				



Chapter 3 Taking the GRE



What Is the GRE?

The GRE, or *Graduate Record Examination*, is a standardized test for students applying to post-graduate programs. The GRE is *not* a knowledge test – it is designed to measure students' ability to analyze and synthesize information, solve problems, think critically, and write clearly.



The test contains three sections: analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning. The verbal and quantitative reasoning tests are scored on a scale between 130 and 170, and the analytical writing section is scored on a points-based scale between 1 and 6 points.



Who Takes the GRE?

The GRE is taken by students from a wide variety of disciplines who are applying to earn their master's degree, master's of business administration, or doctorate – just like you!

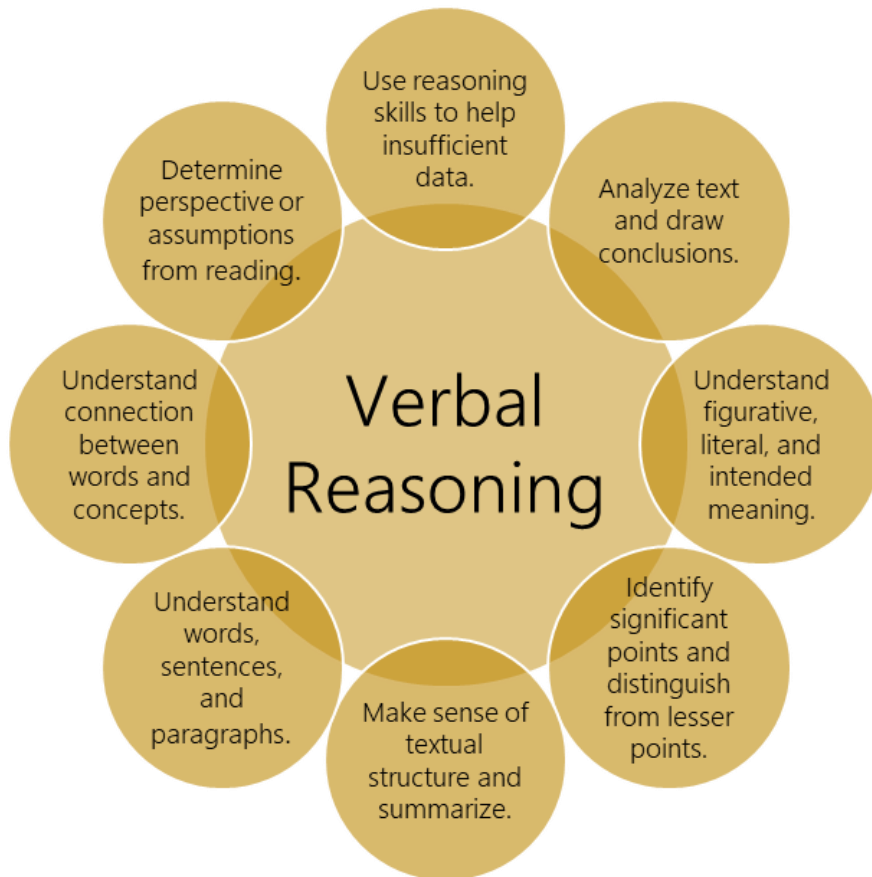
The test uses standardized measures to test each test taker's

skills and abilities, helping administrators to evaluate students fairly, even when they come from different cultural and educational backgrounds. The GRE results make up an important component of each student's application, supplementing his or her undergraduate grade point average, letters of recommendation, and statement of purpose. Sometimes, GRE scores are also included in applications for scholarships, fellowships, and other financial awards.



GRE: Section Overview

The three sections of the GRE – Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing – are designed to test your general intelligence and are not related to your expertise in your chosen field.

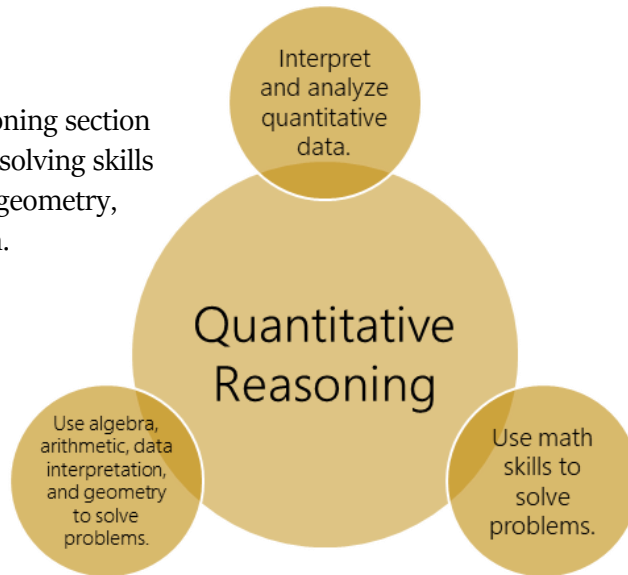


The Verbal Reasoning section will measure your ability to read and understand written content through reading comprehension and vocabulary questions.





The Quantitative Reasoning section will test your problem-solving skills in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and data interpretation.



Finally, the Analytical Writing section will measure your critical thinking skills and ability to explain and support ideas in writing.



GRE: Question Structure

Analytical Writing

- ⇒ Two essays: 30 minutes each = 60 minutes
- ⇒ *Analyze a problem*
- ⇒ *Analyze an argument*

Verbal Reasoning

- ⇒ Two sections: 30 minutes each = 60 minutes
- ⇒ *20 questions in each section*

Quantitative Reasoning

- ⇒ Two sections: 35 minutes each = 70 minutes
- ⇒ *20 questions in each section*

The GRE takes a total of 3 hours and 45 minutes.

In addition to the time required to complete each section, you are given an optional 10-minute break in the middle, and there are transition times included between the sections.

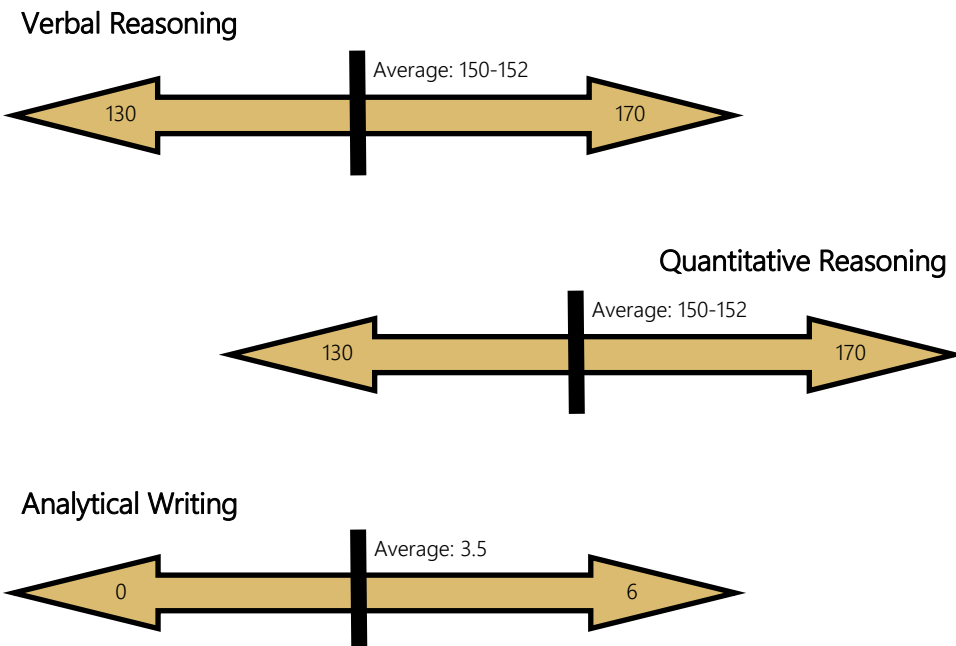


GRE: Scoring

You will be given a raw score for each section and told what *percentile* you fall in—how you compare to other students who have taken the test. For example, if you receive a score of 150 on the Verbal Reasoning test, you will fall in the 50th percentile—meaning that 50 percent of students who took the test received a higher score than you, and 50 percent received a lower score.

Some schools have score cutoffs for each section of the GRE, meaning they will only accept students who receive certain scores or higher. You should know the cutoffs for your potential schools before you go into the test.

After you complete the test, you will be given the option to send your scores for free to up to 4 schools. If you know what schools you may be applying to, sending your scores at this point can save you quite a bit of money. Or if you decide to wait and retake the test later, these original scores will still be there for you to send—the GRE test platform saves your scores for up to 5 years.



GRE Section Spotlight: Verbal Reasoning

The GRE Verbal Reasoning section tests your comprehension of words, sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts, as well as your knowledge of sentence structure and ability to identify relationships between concepts and words.

There will be three types of questions in this section: reading comprehension, text completion, and sentence completion.

Reading Comprehension

- Text analysis
- Breaking down primary and secondary points
- Identify writer's perspective
- Individual meaning of word
- Individual meaning of sentence
- Analyze entire passage
- Practice questions: www.majortests.com/gre/reading_comprehension.php

Text Completion

- Reading skills
- Replace missing words or phrases to complete the sentence
- Practice questions: www.majortests.com/gre/sentence_completion.php

Sentence Completion

- Similar to text completion
- Make sense of an incomplete sentence
- Choose conclusion
- Given two phrases or words to complete the sentences
- Practice questions: www.majortests.com/gre/sentence_equivalence.php



For more information on each section and a few practice questions visit:
www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/verbal_reasoning/

GRE Section Spotlight: Quantitative Reasoning

The GRE Quantitative Reasoning section is one of the most important and comprehensive. It will test your mathematical reasoning skills and ability to apply those skills to a variety of problems. Some of the questions are word problems—they aim to test your real-world skills of converting text to math and solving with the appropriate techniques.

The questions will include arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and data analysis—all skills that you learned in high school!

Arithmetic

- Absolute value
- Decimal representation
- Integer types and properties
- Math operations, roots, exponents
- Number line and number sequence
- Percent
- Ratio

Geometry & Trigonometry

- Area, perimeter, volume
- Circles, triangles, quadrilaterals, polygons
- Three-dimensional figures
- Measurement of angles in degrees
- Perpendicular / parallel lines
- Similar and congruent figures
- Pythagorean theorem

Algebra

- Converting word problems to operations and solving
- Exponents
- Factoring / simplifying equations
- Graphs: Slope, functions, equations, intercepts, inequalities, coordinate geometry
- Relationships, equalities, inequalities, functions
- Quadratic / linear equations
- Simultaneous equations / solving inequalities

Data Analysis

- Basic descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode)
- Counting methods
- Basic probability
- Interpreting tables and graphs

Find more practice questions for the quantitative reasoning section at:

- ➔ www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content/quantitative_reasoning
- ➔ www.majortests.com/gre/quantitative_comparisons.php
- ➔ www.majortests.com/gre/problem_solving.php
- ➔ www.majortests.com/gre/numeric_entry.php

GRE Section Spotlight: Analytical Writing

The essays in the GRE Analytical Writing section are meant to test your critical thinking and writing skills. You will be asked to create a compelling and convincing thesis statement and defend your logic.

This section will measure your ability to make clear, reasoned judgements about the topic you are given—you will not be scored based on your knowledge of the topic.

You will be assessed on your ability to:



There are two essay prompts; you will analyze an issue and analyze an argument. While there is no minimum page number requirement, longer essays tend to score higher because of their deeper analysis of the topic. Remember there is a 30-minute time limit, so you may want to structure your essay in the standard five paragraph format (introduction, three-paragraph body, conclusion).



Basic 5-Paragraph Essay Graphic Organizer

I. Paragraph 1—Introduce Topic
THREE Supportive Ideas (A,B,C)
THESIS STATEMENT

II. Paragraph 2—Introduce and support your **FIRST** supportive idea with three pieces of evidence.

- A. Topic Sentence
 - 1. Evidence
 - 2. Evidence
 - 3. Evidence
- B. Concluding sentence

III. Paragraph 3—Introduce and support your **SECOND** supportive idea with three pieces of evidence.

- A. Topic Sentence
 - 1. Evidence
 - 2. Evidence
 - 3. Evidence
- B. Concluding sentence

IV. Paragraph 4—Introduce and support your **THIRD** supportive idea with three pieces of evidence.

- A. Topic Sentence
 - 1. Evidence
 - 2. Evidence
 - 3. Evidence
- B. Concluding sentence

V. Paragraph 5—
Restate Thesis Statement
RECAP three main supportive ideas
Overall concluding statement





Essay Prompts: Tips for Each Type of Question

Analyze an Issue

- Evaluate the issue
- Form your own views about the issue (agree or disagree)
- Build an argument to support your opinion
- Support your view with reasons and examples

Analyze an Argument

- Assess the logical trustworthiness of the argument presented
- Evaluate the reasons and examples
- Determine if the argument is rational and appropriate
- Address the claims made within the argument

Earn points for:

- Quality and depth of arguments made
- Logical flow of arguments in the essay
- Correctly using effective grammatical structures throughout

Find sample essay prompts at:

- www.800score.com/gre-takeessay.html
- www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/sample_task
- www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/sample_task



Mastering the GRE: Tips for Success

By now, you may be freaking out a bit about this exam. That is completely normal! This test is difficult, and it requires a lot of preparation. But do not fear! Below are some helpful tips to help you succeed!

Tips for Success

- Dedicate at least 4-12 weeks to prepare.
- Take practice tests: www.ets.org/s/gre/accessible/gre_practice_test_3_quant_18_point.pdf.
- Purchase *The Official Guide to the GRE Revised General Test*, available at Amazon: www.amazon.com.
- Give equal attention to each section of the test when preparing.
- Keep a consistent speed throughout each section of the test. You should have enough time to complete each portion, but keep in mind the time limit and do not rush.
- Read all instructions carefully, and thoroughly, to ensure you do not miss an important aspect of the question.
- You can mark questions for later review if you get stuck.
- A calculator will be provided during the quantitative reasoning section as well as scratch paper.
- Try your best to stay calm before, during, and after the test, and remember to give it your best effort!

Adapted from www.discoverbusiness.us/education/online-mba/resources/gre/#1.

Do you feel ready to sign up to take the GRE? The official GRE website has information about the test, testing locations, dates, times, and registration options: www.ets.org/gre.

ETS offers a **GRE Fee Reduction Program** for those with financial need. The certificates are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis to students who meet the eligibility requirements. Individuals who meet the criteria will be required to pay 50 percent of the total test fee. For more information about the Fee Reduction Program, please visit: www.ets.org/gre/subject/about/fees/reduction/.

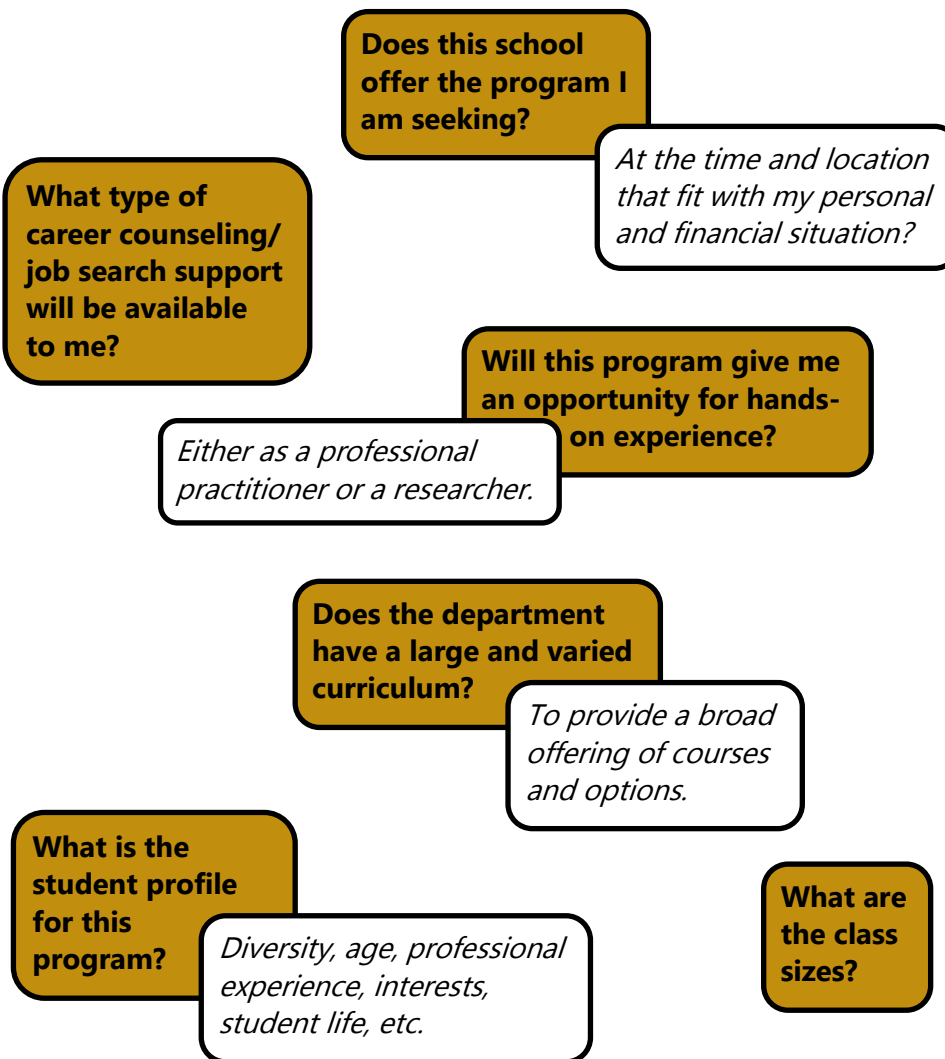


Chapter 4

Questions to Consider When Choosing a Graduate Program



If you have trouble answering any of these questions, refer back to your long-term and short-term goals as well as those key values you have for your life. Check out the school's website and even contact the graduate student coordinator for a specific department/program to help answer some questions.





Do the faculty exhibit special strengths and research qualities?

Through their graduate mentoring, published works, and funded research.

How active are the faculty in my field?

Have undergraduate experiences prepared me for this program?

Academically and professionally.

Is financial support available?

Including teaching and/or research assistantships.

What is the student life like there?

What is the student to staff ratio?

Are there facilities to conduct my research?

How senior are the professors from my area of study?

What are their interests and abilities?

Chapter 5

Graduate School Comparison Worksheet



COLLEGE NAME			
LOCATION Distance from home			
SIZE Enrollment Physical size of campus			
ENVIRONMENT Type of school (MA, Ph.D.) School setting (urban, rural) Male, female, co-ed Religious affiliation			
ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS Deadlines Tests required (GRE, CPI, GMAC) Average test scores, GPA, rank Special requirements Notification			



COLLEGE NAME			
ACADEMICS Majors offered Special requirements Accreditation Student-faculty ratio Typical class size			
COLLEGE EXPENSES Tuition, room & board Estimated total budget Application fees, deposits			
FINANCIAL AID Deadlines Required forms Scholarships & grants Fellowships & assistantships			



COLLEGE NAME			
HOUSING Availability Type & size			
FACILITIES Academic Recreational Other			
ACTIVITIES Clubs, student organizations Athletics Other			
CAMPUS VISITS When?			

Chapter 6

Deadline Tracker



Not all applications will have the same deadline. Use this calendar to stay on top of all your graduate school related deadlines!

April		August		December	
March		July		November	
February		June		October	
January		May		September	

Chapter 7

Statement of Purpose



In grad school applications, the statement of purpose is known by a variety of names: personal statement, application essay, or statement of purpose. Whatever it is called, this crucial essay is your chance to catch the admissions committee's attention and show them what makes you stand out from the other applicants — this is especially important if your grades or test scores are lower than you would like, or you are applying to a competitive program where everyone's scores are high.

Some schools give you a topic to write about or a question to answer with an essay, while others do not. In either case, the statement of purpose is your chance to offer new information about yourself that is not captured by the other parts of your application. It does not have to be a wordy or elaborate story, but it should engage your readers, show that you have the qualities they are seeking in a graduate student, and clearly identify your unique strengths and perspectives.

If the application does not provide a specific question to answer, use the questions below to help formulate your statement:

- What is special, unique, distinctive, or impressive about you and your life story?
- What are your career goals?
- What attracts you to your chosen career? Why?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain?
- If you have worked a job (or jobs!) during your college years, what have you learned? How has that work contributed to your personal, academic, or career growth?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships in your life? How have these experiences made you a better student and a better fit for your chosen career?

Chapter 8

Letters of Recommendation

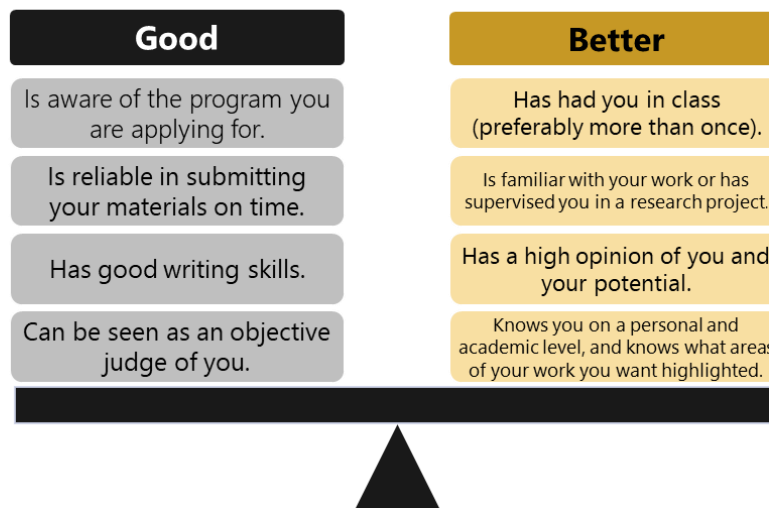


Letters of recommendation can be almost as important as your GPA and GRE scores. These letters help graduate school selection committees understand your credentials and abilities in a more personal way than your test scores allow. The letters also demonstrate how others view your work ethic, personality, experience, and skills. Ask professors who have completed the degree you are seeking — preferably professors who have a Ph.D. and who can speak to your academic ability. Most graduate schools require three letters, so you may wish to have each writer focus on a different aspect of your talent or skills.



Whom Should I Ask?

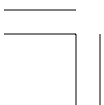
The process of choosing people to ask for letters of recommendation could be the easiest or hardest part of your application, depending on your relationships with your professors. If you are a proactive student who began building relationships with faculty early in your academic career, you will have an easier time than students who have not interacted as much with their professors. The best way to secure strong, positive letters of recommendation is to start getting to know and working with your professors early in your undergraduate career.





- What are two or three of the academic accomplishments that have prepared you most for graduate school?
- What research projects have you worked on or led? What did you learn from them?
- What non-academic experiences have contributed to your choice of career?
- What is unique about the school and program you are applying to that makes you a great fit?
- How much further do you plan go to in your education (i.e. master's degree, Ph.D., career research/academia)?
- Think of a professor in your field you have already worked with and whom you respect. If this professor were reading your application essay, what would most impress him or her about you?

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Answer all questions (if applicable).➤ Be honest and confident.➤ Be coherent and interesting.➤ Develop a thesis about yourself early in the essay and argue it throughout.➤ Pick 2-4 main topics for a 1-page essay.➤ Use the personal statement as a form of introduction.➤ Clearly state your goals and why you chose this program, and demonstrate your knowledge of the school/department.➤ Make sure your spelling and grammar are perfect!➤ Use technical terminology and/or passive voice when appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Write what you think the admissions committee wants to hear.➤ Overwrite or belabor minor points about yourself.➤ Repeat information directly from the application form (unless you illustrate or expand on it).➤ Emphasize the negative parts of your application.➤ Try to be funny. They might not get the joke!➤ Get personal about religion, politics, or gaps in your education.➤ Use footnotes, clichés, or slow introductions.➤ Use hackneyed phrases like "I've always wanted to be a ..."➤ Allow any spelling, grammar, punctuation, format, or printing errors!





How Should I Ask Them?



Once you have identified your three letter-writers, the best way to ask them for letters is to meet with them in person. That way, you can discuss your graduate school and career interests and how each professor can help you achieve your goals.

However, if you cannot make your request in person, you can also contact them via email.

Remember the five rules of requesting letters by email:

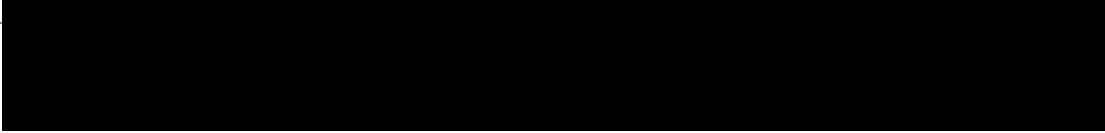
- ① Keep it short.
- ② Refresh their memory.
- ③ Show interest in their field.
- ④ Be assertive and specific with request.
- ⑤ Do not assume they will agree to help you.

On the following pages, you will find two templates that you can customize to suit your needs.

References:

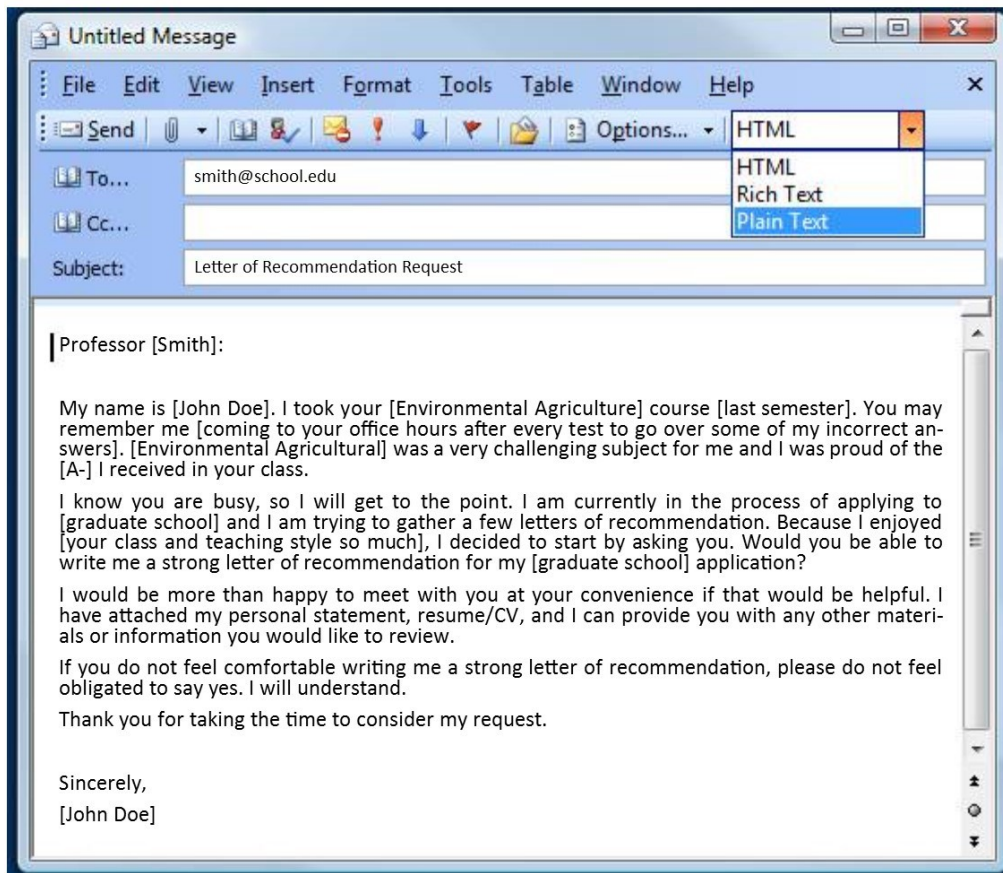
www.edityour.net/email-templates-for-asking-for-a-letter-of-recommendation/

www.careers.umbc.edu/gradpub/5.apply/index.html



Standard Email

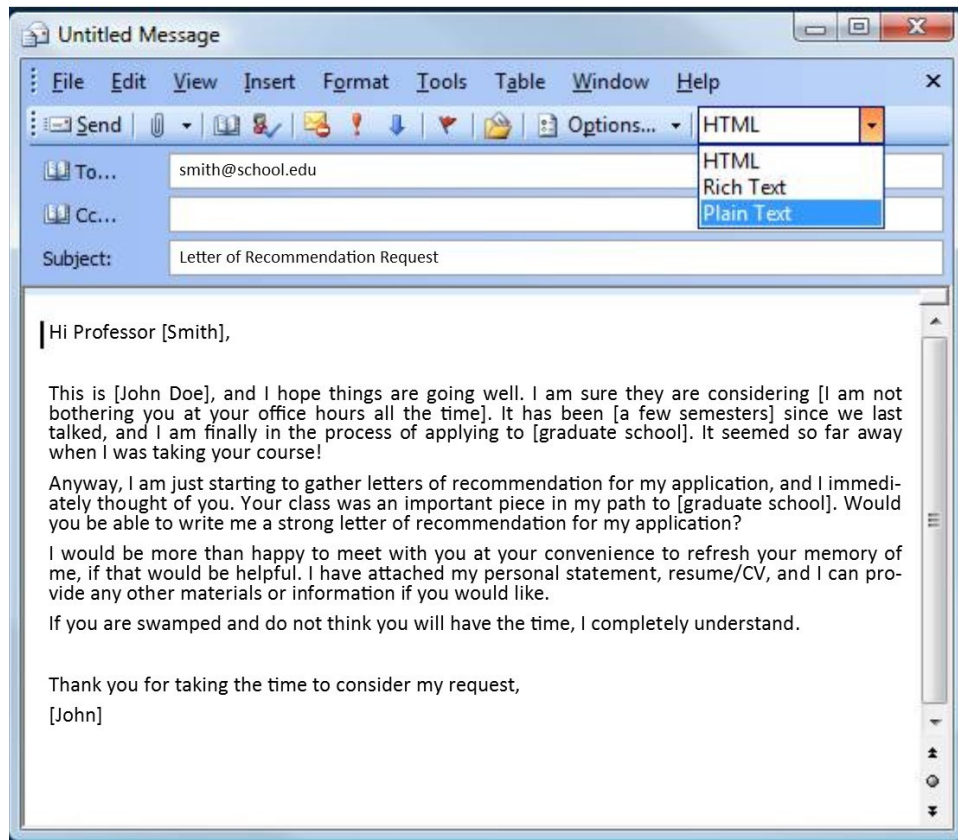
For professors whose classes you did well in and who know you by name.





Casual Email

For professors with whom you have a well-established relationship – think of the professors who would greet you by your first name.



Chapter 9

Applying for Internships



Completing an internship is an important step in your undergraduate career. Having an internship teaches you essential skills you cannot gain in a classroom-it gives you a taste of what the working world is like, while helping you decide if your chosen major will lead to a career you enjoy. Internships also connect you with experienced professionals who can introduce you to others in your field and even become mentors to you.

Finding An Internship

As you begin to plan for your internship, think about the field or job you want to explore or specific skills you want to gain. Talk with your advisor, professors, classmates, and people in the field you want to explore to gain more information about potential internships in your area of interest. You can also search the internet for sites specifically for finding internships.



Here are two to begin with, but talk to your advisor about others s/he may recommend:

- ➔ www.internships.com/student
- ➔ www.idealists.org/ (Specifically for non-profit organizations)

There are paid and unpaid internships available all around the country, but the most important factor to remember is the experience you will gain in your area of interest, learning firsthand about your chosen profession and the career path you may take to get there.



Choosing Your Internship

Consider the six criteria below when researching potential internships.

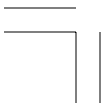
Your experience should be **relevant** to your major and goals, as well as be in a **feasible location**, especially if the internship is unpaid. Supervisors sometimes offer their interns full-time positions after graduation, so the internship's opportunities for **networking** and finding **mentors** are vital.



Because undergraduate students have jobs, classwork, and other commitments on top of internship duties, **flexibility** is important, too. Summer is often the best time to complete your internship, while your class duties are typically lighter.

How is the **working environment** at each internship? Does your personality fit well with the company culture and your fellow employees' work style? Each internship's environment is highly dependent on the field and the actual position, so make sure you understand the job's daily responsibilities, what they expect of their interns, and whom you will report to.

<p>Career Relevance: You want an internship that will help you gain valuable experience that you can use in your future work. Do not accept an internship just for the sake of having an internship – make sure it matches your career goals and interests.</p>
<p>Location: Be realistic in how far you can feasibly travel for your internship and know your personal and financial limits. Your internship should not be a burden to you.</p>
<p>Networking: You want an internship that will introduce you to professionals who can connect you to jobs and provide professional references for you in the future.</p>
<p>Scheduling Flexibility: You want an internship in which supervisors can understand that there will be times you need to attend other things in your schedule (i.e., class).</p>
<p>Mentors: It is important to have one or more mentors in your internship who will help you learn the job, help you apply your skills to your career planning, and look out for your academic and personal well-being.</p>
<p>Working Environment: Your internship should be a place where your personality fits with the company, where expectations and responsibilities are reasonable, and where you will be safe, nurtured, and respected.</p>



Chapter 10

Approaching a New Faculty Member



You have found your dream school with your dream program; now you have to approach a faculty member about research. Daunting? No way! Use these tips and adapt the template to impress that professor and get that assistantship!

DO

Identify yourself.

Do not write a generic message and only sign it with your first name. Tell them who you are! Include your name, major, school, year, and how you found out about them (met them while visiting the school, referred to by someone else, etc.).

Address the individual you are emailing.

Do not use "Hi" or "Dear Professor." Personalize your message so it does not appear that you sent this email to multiple people.

Sell yourself!

You are basically advertising yourself as a potential graduate student to a faculty member you would like to work with. Be careful not to write a novel about yourself, but identify what sparked your interest in the research topic. This is another way to personalize your message and give the faculty member an initial reason to believe your interest in them, and their research, is genuine.

Do your homework.

This is the most important tip of all! You should know what the faculty member's research interests are as well as projects he/she has worked on. Knowing specific details sets you apart from other potential graduate students. It is so much more than just knowing the field of research the faculty member is in. It suggests that you have thought deeply about what type of research you would be interested in pursuing. You can find a list of what a professor has recently published by accessing his/her curriculum vitae, which should be accessible on his/her profile on any departmental webpage. Check out an article – look for some of the key terms of the study. Make a list of questions as you read; professors will be impressed by your curiosity and the time you have taken to investigate their work.



DO

Make it easy to set up a meeting.

Close your email with available times and dates that you could meet or have a conversation on the phone – do not forget to provide your phone number!

Keep it professional

Use this resource for all your professional writing needs!

www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/4/16/

It is important to communicate with potential faculty professionally to show you are serious about your education, your research, and your future.

DO NOT

Send generic emails.

You may be reaching out to several potential faculty members at the same time. Remember to personalize each email to each professor. Do not copy and paste; each email should be unique to each person you are sending it to. Ask yourself, "Can I change the name and send this to someone else?" If the answer is yes, you need to rewrite your message.

Neglect proofreading!

It is as simple as that – catch all the errors before hitting send. Try reading the email aloud to catch word flow, and have someone else take a look to catch something you might have missed.

Give up!

Finding the right faculty advisor may take some time. Professors are also busy, so it may take several days for a response. The "fit" may not be right between the two of you either. Do not get discouraged, though! Ask for suggestions of other faculty members if you get turned down from your initial interest.

Reference:

www.depauw.edu/files/resources/how_to_approach_a_faculty_member.pdf

Chapter 11

Following Up with Faculty



If you do not hear back from your faculty member(s) right away, do not panic—professors receive many emails every day, and there is a good chance yours just got lost under the pile. It might be a good idea to follow up a few days after your initial email, re-introducing yourself and thanking them again for their attention.

You can modify this template for your follow-up emails:



Sample Email Template

A screenshot of an email composition window in Google Chrome. The window title is "Re: Potential grad student, interested in your research - Google Chrome". The address bar shows the URL "https://owa.purdue.edu/owa/#viewmodel=IMailComposeViewModelFactory&wid=14&ispopout=1". The email interface includes a "SEND" button, a "DISCARD" button, and an "INSERT" button. The "To:" field contains "professorjones@university.edu". The "Subject:" field contains "Re: Potential grad student, interested in your research". The email body text is as follows:

Good afternoon Dr. [Jones]!

I wanted to follow up with you on my email from a few days ago regarding my interest in your research - I am a senior at [Purdue University], and I plan to earn my [Master's degree] in [agricultural education] after graduating. I am very interested in your research on [nontraditional science education], and I would love to [meet with you / call you] at your convenience to learn more about your work. Is there a day/time that would be convenient for us to talk?

Thank you very much in advance for your time - I look forward to speaking with you!

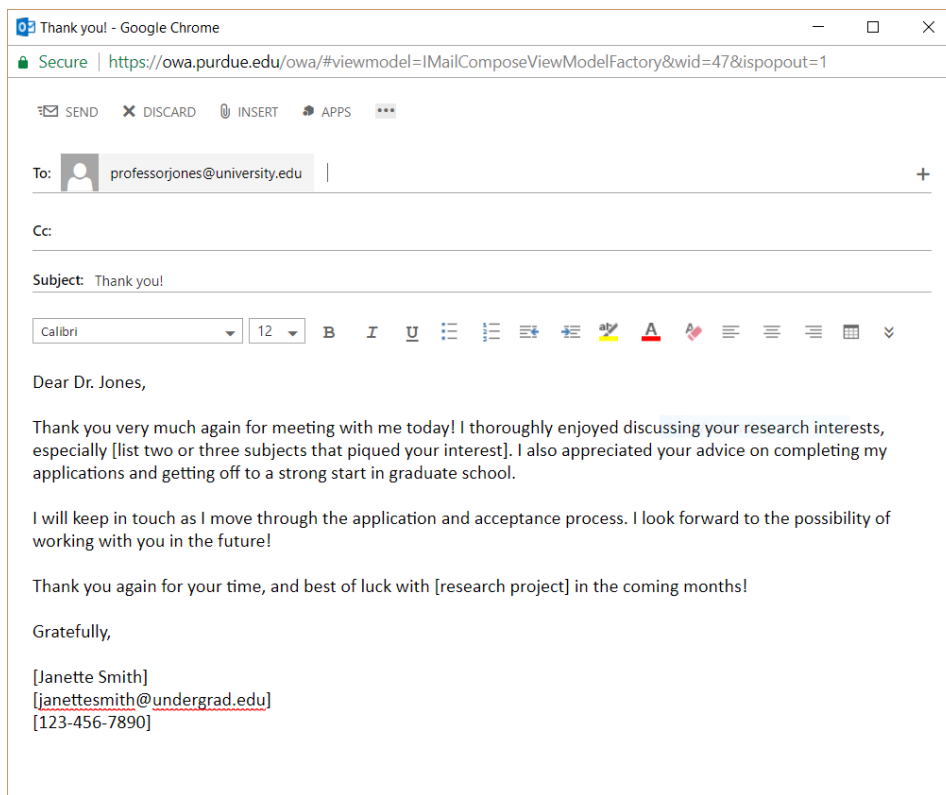
Best,
[Janette Smith]
[janettesmith@undergrad.edu]
[123-456-7890]



After you have met with a potential faculty advisor, either in person or by phone, it is courteous and professional to follow up with an email thanking them for the time they spent with you.

Here is another template you can modify for your own use:

Sample Email Template

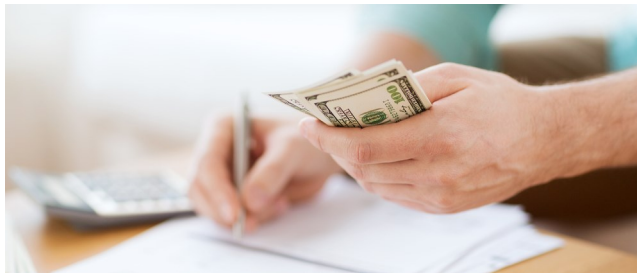


Chapter 12

Funding Opportunities



Education is expensive; however, education is an investment. The goal for just about everyone in school is to graduate with as little debt as possible. Here is the good news: because education is an investment, student loans are seen as “good” debt (plus, if you continue your education, you can extend the grace period on your student loan until you graduate!). Here is another piece of good news: there are several graduate school funding opportunities available to you at just about every institution of higher learning.



There are three common options for graduate school funding – teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and fellowships/grants.

This chapter will give you the basic information about each as well as help you form the right questions when talking to potential faculty about their assistantship opportunities.

Some schools will only offer acceptance into their programs if funding is available, and attached to the offer. Other schools put you up to the task of finding your own funding. Most funding decisions, including assistantships, are made by each individual graduate program. Some programs fund all of their graduate students, although others fund only a few or provide only partial funding support. Some funding opportunities are open for applications, but others are faculty-awarded and therefore not open for applications. Each institution sets up funding a little differently, so you will have to reach out to the school you are applying to for specific information about their funding opportunities – a simple email to a faculty member or the graduate coordinator.



Assistantships

Graduate assistantships allow graduate students to work for a specific university program or department in exchange for certain benefits, including a stipend, tuition and fee waivers, and medical insurance supplements. There are two types of assistantships: teaching and research. Assistantship activities vary but could include:

- ✓ conducting survey research
- ✓ mentoring undergraduates
- ✓ developing websites
- ✓ creating print materials
- ✓ doing library research
- ✓ participating in faculty meetings
- ✓ serving on search committees
- ✓ helping with classroom instruction

The duties of a Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA) are to conduct or support instruction. General tasks for TAs include:

- Teaching classes
- Grading student assignments
- Proctoring exams
- Leading lab or discussion groups in a course setting
- Developing academic instructional materials
- Tutoring students
- Maintaining office hours to provide instructional support

The duties of a Graduate Research Assistant (RA) are to apply and master research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship. General tasks for RAs include:

- Conducting experiments
- Presenting findings in a publication
- Organizing or analyzing data
- Collaborating with faculty in preparing publications
- Overseeing work of other RAs
- Other research activities

Check out the university department webpage you are interested in; there should be a graduate student directory. If you have any questions about the types of tasks graduate students have, reach out to a student and ask. Those students might also be able to connect you to a faculty member or direct you to the right people to talk to about assistantship opportunities available!

Fellowships

A fellowship is a financial award made by the university or an external agency to support students during a portion of their graduate degree programs. Most fellowships are selected on the basis of academic merit and awarded when students apply through their academic program.

Many graduate students are awarded fellowships each year, either by the university or by external agencies. Fellowship benefits include a stipend, a tuition scholarship and medical insurance supplements.

Typically, when graduate students apply for admission, your academic program will consider you for available fellowships without a separate application. Some fellowship opportunities are open for student applications, while others are faculty-awarded and therefore not open. Universities will have institution-specific opportunities, so visit the graduate school website for the school you are applying for more information.

Grants

The road to federal tuition assistance starts with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Any student seeking financial aid from the U.S. government must submit a completed FAFSA before the application deadline. Information contained in your FAFSA is used to paint a picture of your financial status, which colleges and financial aid administrators use to measure your eligibility for grants, loans and scholarships.



Small, supplemental grants are available to graduate students, including travel grants, training grants and childcare grants. Travel grants provide graduate students with funds for travel, and training grants provide funds to develop professional skills. Childcare grants are available to subsidize childcare expenses for graduate students with children. Most grants are open for student applications.

Check out this website for grant opportunities to apply for:
www.collegescholarships.org/grants/graduate.htm

About the M@P Summer Scholars Program



The Mentoring at Purdue (M@P) Summer Scholars Program provides students with the opportunity to visit graduate departments in the Purdue College of Agriculture, engage with future faculty mentors and students, and explore research opportunities. M@P-SSP selects students who have an interest in pursuing a graduate degree from Purdue University and awards these participants with an opportunity to come to our campus. The award will cover the cost of airfare, lodging, and meals.



100% of participants stated this experience exceeded expectations.

97% felt better prepared for graduate school after the program.

97% stated M@P-SSP increased their confidence to apply to graduate school.

78% felt they could connect socially with faculty and students at Purdue.





It is the policy of Purdue University that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. Purdue University is an Affirmative Action institution. This material may be available in alternative formats.

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