

## How to Get into Graduate School

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Unfortunately, there isn't a magic formula or easy answer on how to gain admittance to the best grad programs in the nation. Because competition is intense, you must focus on preparing the best application possible, which entails much more than application materials. Begin early, while in college, and try to do as much of the following as possible:

- Get to know your professors.
- Get involved in research with a professor. If it goes well, you might present a paper at a conference or even get a journal article out of it. Research experience, presentations, and publications are the keys to graduate school.
- Excel in your courses.
- Take plenty of science and math, but also liberal arts courses (English, writing, communications) to develop a well-rounded background and demonstrate your oral and written communication skills.
- Take a GRE prep course to prepare for the Graduate Record Exam.
- Volunteer and participate in campus organizations that relate to your discipline (e.g., math club if you're a student, or volunteer at a social service agency if you're a psychology or social work major).
- Tailor your applications to particular programs. In other words, research your programs to determine your "fit" to each. Each application should demonstrate that you're an excellent fit to each program in terms of your interests, career goals, and abilities.

These ideas are just a start. For more resources and tips for making your application stand out, check out the links in [Your Guide to Graduate School Admissions](#).

Finally, you mentioned that your ultimate career goal is to become a college professor. I'm sure that you're aware of the great paucity of academic positions. Hundreds of applicants may compete for one position. While graduating from an excellent program will certainly help, what you do in graduate school is much more important. So what should you do in graduate school to make yourself competitive for academic positions?

- Publish, publish, publish
- Get some teaching experience, but wait until later in your program, after you've completed coursework and have some research, presentations, and perhaps publications under your belt.