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## **Graduate School Application Timeline & Checklist**

### **A Step-by-Step Planning Guide (18 Months to Submission)**

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#### **18–12 Months Before Application Deadlines**

##### **Program & Career Preparation**

- Identify 10–15 potential graduate programs
- Review program focus, degree structure, and outcomes
- Study faculty research interests and recent publications
- Decide whether a master's or PhD track aligns with goals

##### **Academic & Research Preparation**

- Seek research assistantships, labs, or independent projects
  - Begin developing specific research interests
  - Strengthen GPA in major-related coursework
  - Attend academic conferences or departmental talks (if available)
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#### **12–9 Months Before Deadlines**

##### **Testing & Credentials**

- Confirm whether GRE or other standardized tests are required
- Begin test preparation (2–3 months recommended)
- Take GRE early enough to allow a retake if needed

##### **Application Foundations**

- Update academic CV
  - Draft an initial personal statement outline
  - Identify 3–4 potential faculty recommenders
  - Visit campuses or attend virtual information sessions if possible
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#### **9–6 Months Before Deadlines**

## **Application Assembly**

- Finalize list of 6–8 graduate programs
  - Request recommendation letters (6–8 weeks notice)
  - Provide recommenders with:
    - CV
    - Draft personal statement
    - Program list with deadlines
  - Begin writing program-specific personal statements
  - Collect unofficial transcripts from all institutions
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## **3–0 Months Before Deadlines**

### **Final Review & Submission**

- Revise personal statements for clarity and program fit
  - Proofread all materials carefully
  - Complete online application forms
  - Upload writing samples (if required)
  - Submit applications 1–2 weeks before deadlines
  - Confirm recommendation letters are submitted
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## **Post-Submission (January–April)**

- Monitor application portals and email updates
  - Prepare for interviews if invited
  - Compare offers, funding, and timelines
  - Accept or decline offers by stated deadlines
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## **Application Cost Planning Checklist**

- Application fees (per program)
- Test registration and score reporting

- Transcript fees
  - Interview or campus visit travel
  - Emergency buffer for unexpected costs
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### **Final Notes**

Early planning reduces stress, improves application quality, and increases acceptance chances. Spread tasks over time to avoid rushed, weaker submissions.

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