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How to Know if Grad School is the Next Step for You

What's your next step?

The finish line is within reach, and you'll be finishing your undergrad soon. **What's next for you?** This can be a tough question to answer. Has grad school crossed your mind? If it has, **how can you be sure that it's the right move for you?** To help you make that decision, we've compiled a list of questions and factors you should consider before applying to grad school.



Questions to ask yourself

How can you be sure that grad school is the right decision for you? **Ask yourself these three questions** to see if you're ready for grad school:

1. Why do I want to go to grad school?

Is there a **specific topic or field you want to specialize in**? Does your **career require further education**? Do you want to **develop your professional and research skills**? Do you enjoy the learning environment? Knowing what you want to get out of grad school can help you narrow down your school and program choices.

2. Can I afford to go to grad school?

Embarking on another degree is not cheap. Can you afford to go back to school? What kind of **financial aid** does the school offer? Are you able to **work part-time** while in the program? Are there opportunities to **work on campus** (eg. research assistant or teaching assistant)?

3. Am I ready to be challenged?

A master's or PhD program is much more intense than a bachelor's. Consider what your program will require you to do. Will you be conducting **major research projects** on your own and presenting them? Will you need to **publish your work**? Is it mandatory for you to **teach an undergraduate tutorial or class** on top of your own classes? Make sure you know what is expected so you can properly assess your capabilities.

Seven reasons why grad school could be for you

When exploring the possibility of going to grad school, it's **helpful to know its advantages** before applying.

1. Set yourself apart from other applicants

In a pool of applicants all applying for one job, how can you set yourself apart? More people than ever are getting bachelor's degrees, so grad degrees are one of the best ways to stand out from the crowd. A grad degree will show that you have more **advanced knowledge in your field of study, as well as useful skills** which make you more appealing as an applicant.

2. Increased salary

If you have a grad degree, you typically have a greater earning potential than those with bachelor's, as grad degrees demonstrate more experience, expertise, and essential skills. With a grad degree, you can also **earn more money over time** as you can be **considered for promotions** thanks to your background education.

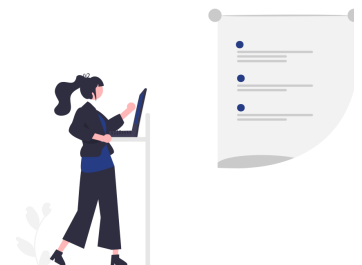
3. Create connections

In grad school, you'll **work alongside academic professionals, industry experts, and fellow grad students**. These connections you make are valuable and can help you in your academic journey and future career. You never know who you'll meet that can impact your career and life.

You may be able to **use these connections as references when applying for jobs**. Making connections will also help you **increase your skill set and learn industry tips and secrets** that could help you market yourself when job hunting.

4. Opportunities for research, publication, and travel

Whether you're conducting your own research or assisting with a professor's, you'll have opportunities to **participate in research, publish your work, and present your findings to others at conferences**. You'll gain valuable skills as well as earn recognition for your work.



5. Passion

If you've found your passion in your undergrad, why not continue with it and delve deeper into the subject? We all know the saying, "choose a job you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life." The same goes for your education. **If you love what you're studying, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment and pride for all the effort you put in.**

6. Opportunity to work on career-making projects

As a grad student, you may have opportunities to work alongside notable professors and your fellow classmates to **develop something new or find a breakthrough in research**. You could be a part of something that could change the future of your field.

7. Funding

A big perk of grad school is **it's usually partially — or even fully — funded**. Many schools will offer financial aid to make grad school more affordable, and some will even pay you to be a teaching assistant or research assistant on top of any scholarships you'll receive.

Three reasons why grad school may not be for you

Grad school **may not be the best option for you** if you're pursuing it for any of these reasons:

1. You want to delay entering the workforce

Graduation can be a scary time — especially when everyone is talking about the jobs they've lined up and you're not so sure about your future. If you want to go to grad school solely to **delay entering the real world**, then you might not do too well. To succeed in grad school, you need to have the motivation and desire to go.

2. You want to continue the undergrad experience

Unfortunately, a grad degree is a lot different from an undergrad. Your **studies become more intense and narrow**, you need to **put more effort in your research or projects**, and you may find you have **less time for social activities**.

3. You're doing it to make your parents happy

Your parents may push you to add a grad degree to your resumé. But, is this something you really want? **If you're not fully invested in grad school, you may find it more difficult to complete the assignments and motivate yourself to put in the work**. Don't let anyone pressure you to continue your education if you're ready to move on to a new chapter of your life.



Do you see grad school in your future?

Embarking on another degree is no easy feat, but if you're up for the challenge and excited for the possibilities, start applying to grad school! **Good luck!**

