

What Do You Need if You Want to Go to Graduate School?

1. **A strong interest in a specialized area of study.** Graduate study requires time, financial sacrifice, dedication and motivation. If you do not possess a strong interest in your chosen area of study, you will not have a positive experience in graduate school.
2. **A competitive grade point average.** This means a 3.6+ for a Ph.D. or Psy.D. program or a 3.2+ for a master's program.
3. **Favorable letters of recommendation.** These are very important. Most programs require three letters however if you are applying to a clinical/counseling area, some programs may require three academic (from a professor) letters while others require 2 academic letters and 1 letter from a supervisor from a field experience.
4. **Relevant experience.** Ph.D. programs and research-oriented masters programs will look favorably upon research experience such as independent research, senior thesis, conference presentations, working with a professor on their research, etc. If you are applying to a counseling, clinical Ph.D. or Psy.D. program, volunteering in counseling agencies, field work, internships, etc. will be required.
5. **Personal qualities that will increase your chance of success and potential in graduate school and in your chosen field of study.** Graduate programs look for evidence that you can work independently, manage your time well, show a strong interest in psychology, be a leader and exhibit maturity and professionalism. You can demonstrate these qualities by earning high grades while being involved in other activities or jobs, being involved in research and applied experiences and taking leadership roles in student organizations.
6. **A thoughtful statement of purpose/personal statement.** This is an essay in which you have the opportunity to sell yourself to the potential graduate program, describe your credentials and convince the program that your interests and goals match with what the graduate program offers.
7. **Appropriate coursework.** Find out as soon as possible what the coursework requirements are for your area of interest or for your desired programs. For example, Ph.D. programs will require research-based coursework while applied programs may require Theories of Personality.
8. **A strong Curriculum Vitae.** This is an academic resume that summarizes your relevant accomplishments.

9. **Valuable advice.** Talk to professors, alumni and people who work in your desired area of study so that you can benefit from their experience and knowledge. If you request it, most programs will connect you with a current student or faculty member so that you can ask questions about the program or career paths related to that program.

10. **Competitive GRE scores.** For doctoral programs, scores of 160 for verbal (previously a 600) and a 148 for quantitative (previously a 600) is recommended. For masters programs, scores of 153 for verbal (previously a 500) and a 144 quantitative (previously a 500) is recommended. Some graduate programs may also require you to take the GRE subject test in psychology.