



CRA-W

Computing Research Association
Women

How Do I Successfully Apply to Graduate School?

Deciding Where to Apply	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What areas of computing interest me? (Architecture, AI, Bioinformatics, HCI, Systems, Theory, CS Education, etc.)2. What type of degree am I considering? MS? PhD? Why?3. What type of academic environment works well for me?4. Do I have any geographic preferences? Any restrictions?5. What are my academic credentials? (GPA, research experience, test scores, communication skills)6. Who is on the faculty at the school I am applying to? Who would I like to be my advisor?
Preparing Application Materials (Pay attention to deadlines)	EVERY program is different, but most want: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• application (basic contact info)• transcripts• letters of recommendation (2-3)• statement of purpose (goals/research/intent)• resume• test scores (GRE; TOEFL or IELTS)• fee
Engaging Reference Letter Writers	Ask “Would you be able to provide a strong recommendation?” Give them materials (transcript, resume, statement of purpose, chart of schools, deadlines, how to submit letter) at least 2-3 weeks before first deadline.
Taking GREs	Take spring junior/fall senior years, retake if needed. If non-native English speaker take proficiency exam (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS).
Finalizing Applications	Pay attention to deadlines, follow up with letter writers, report test scores, and request official transcripts.
Financing Your Graduate Study	Apply for financing options, such as teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships (NSF Graduate Fellowship), and other grants. Many deadlines are late Fall or early Spring for following academic year.
Evaluating Offers	Spend time researching programs, visit the schools, meet faculty in your interest area(s), meet current grad students/alumni and ask about their experiences.
Making the Final Decision	You will likely do well at any of your top choices. Make a decision, inform schools, write thank you notes to letter writers, and CELEBRATE!

(OVER)



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Master's degree	Ph.D. degree
1-2 years	3-7 years (most often 4-6)
Courses + Project or Thesis Some programs: Courses only	Courses + Research + Dissertation
More attractive for industry/lab	Minimum for industry/lab research
Minimum for academic instructor	Minimum for tenure-track academic position
Some opportunities to specialize	Become expert in a particular research area
Often limited graduate study funding	Easier to obtain RA/TA support

Additional Resources

Applying to Ph.D. Programs in Computer Science:

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~harchol/gradschooltalk.pdf>



Graduate School Tips:

<http://www.gradschooltips.com/>



CRA-W Resources for Graduate Students:

<http://cra.org/cra-w/for-graduate-students/>



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