# How Do I Successfully Apply to Graduate School?

## Deciding Where to Apply

1. What areas of computing interest me?
2. What type of degree am I considering? MS? PhD? Why?
3. What type of academic climate do I want to study in?
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:
- application (basic contact info)
- transcripts
- letters of recommendation (2-3)
- statement of purpose (goals/research/intent)
- resume
- test scores (GRE, TOEFL / IELTS)
- fee

## Engaging Reference Letter Writers

Ask “Would you be able to provide a positive 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 TOEFL, TOEIC.

## Finalizing Applications

Pay attention to deadlines, follow up with letter writers, report test scores, request official transcripts.

## Financing Your Graduate Study

Apply for financing options, such as teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships (NSF Graduate Fellowship), and other grants.

## 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 decision and inform schools, write thank you notes to letter writers, CELEBRATE!

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