How do I plan for Graduate School?

When is the best time to take my Test Prep Course and my Official Test?

**Suggested Timeline**

**12-18 months before you want to begin graduate school:**

1) Research your prospective graduate programs through university websites and phone calls/ e-mails to admissions offices. Items to inquire about include:
   - Admissions requirements – application deadline, start date of program, etc.
   - Average verbal and quantitative scores on official entrance tests for the class just admitted.
   - Degree requirements.
   - Internships, graduate assistantships, fellowships and scholarships.
   - Job placement statistics for recent graduates.

2) Research the geographical area of each university. Information to consider includes:
   - Cost of living.
   - Population and demographics.
   - Climate and recreational opportunities.
   - Proximity to public transportation, airports, etc.

3) Tell your undergraduate professors that you would like to attend graduate school and ask them about what you should do to prepare. Items to inquire about include:
   - Do you need to join professional organizations; do volunteer work, publish papers, or accomplish other tasks that will make you a more desirable candidate?
   - How long will it take to get a degree in your field?
   - Does someone with your career goals need an advanced degree?
   - Can someone with your career goals stop after receiving a master’s degree, or should you obtain a PhD, EdD, or other advanced degree? If you need a more advanced degree, is it advisable to go straight from your undergraduate studies into a program for that degree, or should you go for a master’s degree first?
   - What do your professors know about the specific programs that you are considering?
   - What other advice do your professors have for you?

4) Research the test makers’ websites - [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com) or [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org). Items to investigate include:
   - How far in advance can I register?
   - Is there a local test site where I live, or will I have to travel? (Flagstaff currently offers locations to take both the GRE® and the GMAT®.)
   - What is the format of the test?
   - In what areas do I need the most review?

Note: Some graduate programs require the GRE® Subject Tests which are currently offered 3 times per year in Psychology, Physics, Mathematics, Literature in English, Chemistry, Biology, and Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology.

5) Start a savings account dedicated to Test Prep and Official Test fees. **Cont.**
6-8 months before your first graduate program application deadline:

1) Begin your graduate school application process. Items to create and consider include:
   - Create a spreadsheet with your research, program contact information, and a calendar to keep track of details and deadlines.
   - Create a reference list that includes professors, employers, community service contacts, etc. Contact them and ask if they are willing to serve as a reference and write a letter of recommendation if needed.
   - Do I have to write an essay or statement?
   - Do I need to create a curriculum vitae?
   - What other documents do I need to create or collect?

2) Enroll in your Test Prep Course.

4-6 months before your first graduate program application deadline:

1) Take your Test Prep Course.
2) Take your Official Test soon after your Test Prep Course. Remember…. no pressure! You can re-take the test several times. GRE® offers Score Select which allows you to choose your best scores within the last 5 years to submit to four institutions for free. GMAT® will report all of your official scores within the last 5 years to five institutions for free. Decide on your free score recipients prior to your test.
3) If you don’t achieve your desired scores:
   - Take a break from the intense preparation process. GRE® currently allows re-takes every 30 days with a maximum of 5 tests in a 12-month period; GMAT® currently allows re-takes every 31 days with a maximum of 5 tests in a 12-month period.
   - Re-register for the official test.
   - Review your Test Prep Course materials.
   - Try again with the confidence that you’ve already been through the official test experience.
4) Get your details in order for all of your graduate school applications. Items to consider:
   - Ask several people to proofread your essays and statements.
   - Know which delivery method(s)—electronic or postal services—your programs use to accept application materials.
   - Know how long it will take for your materials to arrive and plan accordingly.

2 months before your first graduate program application deadline:

1) Ask your references that know your work best to write letters of recommendation. Give them clear instructions for deadlines and methods for submission (online, email prompt, sealed envelope), etc.

1 month before your first graduate program application deadline:

1) Send official transcripts from each undergraduate school that you have attended to any graduate schools that require them.
2) Send GRE® or GMAT® scores to any graduate schools that you did not list as score recipients when you took your Official Test.
3) Set your calendar dates for final application submission at least one week before stated deadlines.