



# CRA-W

Computing Research Association  
Women

## How Do I Successfully Apply to Graduate School?

<b>Deciding Where to Apply</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What areas of computing interest me? (Architecture, AI, Bioinformatics, HCI, Systems, Theory, CS Education, etc.)</li><li>2. What type of degree am I considering? MS? PhD? Why?</li><li>3. What type of academic environment works well for me?</li><li>4. Do I have any geographic preferences? Any restrictions?</li><li>5. What are my academic credentials? (GPA, research experience, test scores, communication skills)</li><li>6. Who is on the faculty at the school I am applying to? Who would I like to be my advisor?</li></ol>
<b>Preparing Application Materials</b> (Pay attention to deadlines)	EVERY program is different, but most want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• application (basic contact info)</li><li>• transcripts</li><li>• letters of recommendation (2-3)</li><li>• statement of purpose (goals/research/intent)</li><li>• resume</li><li>• test scores (GRE; TOEFL or IELTS)</li><li>• fee</li></ul>
<b>Engaging Reference Letter Writers</b>	If planning to take time off from school before applying, keep in touch with faculty. 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.
<b>Taking GREs</b>	Take spring junior/fall senior years; retake if needed. If non-native English speaker take proficiency exam (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS).
<b>Finalizing Applications</b>	Follow up with letter writers, report test scores, and request official transcripts.
<b>Financing Your Graduate Study</b>	Apply for teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships (NSF Graduate Fellowship), and other grants. Deadlines may be as early as mid-Fall for next academic year.
<b>Evaluating Offers</b>	Spend time researching programs. Visit the schools, meet faculty in your interest area(s), meet current grad students/alumni and ask about their experiences.
<b>Making the Final Decision</b>	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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<b>Master's degree</b>	<b>Ph.D. degree</b>
<b>1-3 years</b>	<b>3-7 years (most often 4-6)</b>
<b>Courses + Project or Thesis</b> <b>Some programs: Courses only</b>	<b>Courses + Research + Dissertation</b>
<b>More attractive for industry/lab</b>	<b>Minimum for industry/lab research</b>
<b>Minimum for academic instructor</b>	<b>Minimum for tenure-track academic position</b>
<b>Some opportunities to specialize</b>	<b>Become expert in a particular research area</b>
<b>Often limited graduate study funding</b>	<b>Easier to obtain RA/TA support</b>

## Additional Resources

Applying to Ph.D. Programs in Computer Science:

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



M.S. or Ph.D.? And how to apply:

<https://cs.stanford.edu/degrees/phd/PhD/GraduateSchoolAdvice.pdf>



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