

Advice on Gaining Admission to Graduate Programs

Peer advisors and faculty are often asked how a student should prepare for graduate training, and how one's chances for graduate admission can be improved. Here are a few tips followed by some resources for selecting a graduate program and information on graduate exams.

1. A solid background in statistics and methodology is essential. The Department of Psychology at Boise State University (BSU) offers PSYC 295 (Statistical Methods); this course is required for a psychology major and is a pre-requisite for many other psychology courses. Another statistics class offered for the psychology major is PSYC 405 (Advanced Statistical Methods), which is an optional psychology course. The department at BSU also offers PSYC 321 (Research Methods), which is required for a psychology major and a pre-requisite for many other psychology courses.
2. A strong background in general psychology is very important. Having a well-rounded understanding of psychology is suggested over becoming a "specialist" too early in your career. The Department of Psychology at BSU has helped decrease the likelihood of becoming too specialized by sub-grouping psychology courses. Students are given options from several courses and are asked to pick at least one from each sub-group. Please see the [Psychology Major Checklist](#) for the required sub-group options.
3. Research experience is essential. You should arrange for individual experience working with at least one faculty member on research. This typically involves enrolling in PSYC 488. Consult the [list of faculty research interests on the Psychology web site](#) and then contact faculty with whom you might like to work. The strongest applicants for graduate training have participated in the presentation of a paper at a conference and/or co-authorship of a paper submitted for publication.
4. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Psychology Subject Test are required and used by many graduate programs in psychology. Many students find it helpful to prepare for the GRE by taking practice examinations and studying with exercises. Please see the information on graduate exams following these tips.
5. Letters of recommendation (usually two or more; BSU recommends three) are an important part of any graduate application. These are best written by faculty members who have had direct experience with you beyond the classroom. Keep this in mind as you plan your major with an advisor.
6. If you are a declared psychology major, you can find additional information about getting into graduate school on the Blackboard site for majors. Once into [Blackboard](#) simply click on Psychology Majors. Among other things, you will find "The grad school guide: Tips for getting in!" on that Blackboard site.

Resources for Selecting a Graduate Program

Books

Peterson's Graduate Schools in the U.S. (1999). Princeton, NJ: Peterson's.

Peters, R. L. (1997). *Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning a Master's or Ph.D.* New York, NY: The Noonday Press, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Graduate Study in Psychology 2004 (2004). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Norcross, J. C., Sayette, M. A., & Mayne, T. J. (2002). *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Getting In: A Step-By-Step Plan for Gaining Admission To Graduate School in Psychology (1998). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Websites

Psychology Graduate Applicants portal: <http://www.psychgrad.org/>

Peterson's. The Education Supersite. Find a Graduate School, apply to a graduate school, prepare for graduate school by taking practice entrance exams.
<http://www.petersons.com/>

Embark.com. "Find, apply and get into the right program for you."
<http://www.embark.com/>

Gradview. According to the website, "GradView is your one-stop Internet resource for everything you need to know about graduate school." www.gradview.com

Grad Schools.com: <http://www.gradschools.com/psychologysearch.html>

The APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation website contains the only official web list of professional psychology programs accredited by the APA Committee on Accreditation. However, it is for informational purposes only and should not be used for official credential review. The Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation is not responsible for the accuracy of any accredited status representations on any other website: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/doctoral.html>

Graduate Exams

GRE (Graduate Record Exam). Site where you can take practice tests, register for tests and buy study guides. www.gre.org

Educational Testing Service. Parent organization for the GRE, SAT, GMAT and other exams. Also has a section of the website devoted to selecting a program. www.ets.org/