

Recommendations for preparing for graduate school as a sophomore

**There are many sources of advice for college students thinking about going to graduate school; I highly recommend seeking advice from as many sources as possible. Here is my advice:

- Focus on truly mastering the material covered in your classes and determining the best study strategies to help you do so. If you truly master the material in your classes and put in the effort needed to succeed, good grades typically follow. Remember learning takes concerted effort and succeeding in graduate school will take years of concerted, persistent effort; practice now.
 - The recommended GPA varies by type of graduate school you are pursuing, but the higher your GPA is, the better your chances of getting in are.
- If you are struggling to master the material in a class (or classes), seek assistance from the professor(s) and utilize resources available on campus (e.g., the writing center, the psychology department statistics tutors).
- If you think you want to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology: Take psychology statistics, your core psychology courses, and the psychology lab as soon as possible. (Psychology is a science, make sure you want to do research as early as possible.)
- Pay attention to things you find fascinating (these may be areas that you want to pursue in graduate school).
- Explore the sections of the psychology department website related to graduate school and careers in psychology. Many students do not know all of the various types of potential careers and graduate schools and thus are pursuing a path toward a degree they ultimately do not want or may not need.
- If you feel confident in the type of graduate school you would like to pursue:
 - Explore the psychology labs looking for research assistants.
 - Once you find a lab (or more than one) that you'd like to work in:
 - Determine if you meet their requirements. If not, obtain those requirements as soon as possible. If you do, follow their directions for how to apply to the lab.
 - Continue reading scholarly articles or books related to that path. For instance, if you are interested in social psychology, begin reading different types of articles in social psychology journals to begin to explore types of social psychology research you may want to conduct in graduate school.
 - Think about summer opportunities you may be able to pursue related to your ideal path (e.g., research assistantships, work opportunities, volunteer opportunities), and apply for those.
 - If you are pursuing a graduate degree in a field related to psychology, take courses in that area. (E.g., social work classes if interested in going to social work school, Pol 306 & 307 if interested in going to law school).
- Continue being involved in the campus and/or broader community through clubs, meaningful volunteer opportunities (volunteering once for 2 hours is not meaningful, volunteering at the same place for 2 hours per week for a year or more is), or part-time work. *Be careful you do not engage in so many out-of-class activities that it negatively impacts your grades though.
- Continue getting to know your psychology professors and professors in other departments who teach topics related to your chosen career path. You will need at least 3 strong letters of recommendation

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to get into graduate school. In order to write a strong letter your letter writers will need to know you as a person, not just as a student who did well in their class.