CONSIDERING GRADUATE SCHOOL

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1. Choosing a Grad School

Sending out grad school applications is time-consuming and expensive. Skip the blitz method; don't apply to every school with a program in your field. Instead, focus your attention and energy on a few carefully chosen schools.

Divide and (hopefully) conquer

We recommend dividing potential graduate schools into categories based on your chances of admission, just as you did when applying to undergrad. Select two schools you're fairly certain will accept you, two with whom you believe you have a fair chance of admission and one “reach” school. This is your target list; add more schools if you have the time and money to do so.

Remember that you'll be hitting the books, not the links

There are many factors to take into account when choosing schools for your target list. The quality of life, social scene and surrounding community will all certainly impact your happiness. But these considerations, while significant, should be secondary. You're not taking out thousands of dollars in student loans to go to great parties or dine at the best campus cafeterias in the land. For grad students, the academic experience is paramount.

Your career goals will impact what you look for in an academic department. If you want a master's degree to round out your education or give you that professional edge, then the overall quality of the faculty may be more important than finding the ideal mentor.

If you are aiming for a PhD, however, it's critical to find a specific professor to serve as your thesis advisor. This person will be your guide, mentor and critic. The best advisors are approachable, available and engaged in your work. Apply to schools that have one or more professors who do research in your general area of interest, and with whom you can imagine working closely for a year (or six).

Make personal connections

To get the real scoop on a school, turn off your computer and pick up the phone. Better yet, hop in a car or get on a plane. A conversation with the faculty members you are most interested in working with will give you insight into the program and the dynamics of the department. And making personal connections with professors will certainly help your application. Make sure you can picture collaborating with these people for one or several years.

You should also contact grad students currently studying in that department. Do they enjoy working with their professors? Do they feel they have been given enough guidance and opportunity to develop their own research? Are they pressured to follow a certain methodology? What are the positives and negatives of the department and the school at large?

Two final considerations
Since you will be spending much of your time doing research, you should check to make sure that the institution has adequate facilities and resources for your particular needs. This could include labs, libraries, grants and summer fellowships. Finally, remember to peruse the graduate course catalogue. Even if you're pursuing a PhD, the first year or two of graduate school generally involves regular coursework. Make sure that the classes offered are relevant to your interests and that they'll complement your research.

2. TALKING TO PROFESSORS AT PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS
With all the electronic steps involved in applying to graduate schools, it's easy to conclude that "paperwork" is what it's all about. But the process doesn't end with the application. When it comes to graduate admissions, you have a big advantage if you talk to people. The conversations you've shared with faculty at your prospective schools will play an important part come decision time. A typical graduate program receives only hundreds—not thousands—of applications each year. Out of these hundreds, a program might extend offers of admission to a few dozen, expecting some of those admitted to choose other schools. Usually, the number of candidates is small enough that the admissions committee can expect to meet, or at least talk to, a significant portion. Faculty members who are not on the admissions committee often lobby it to admit preferred candidates. Therefore, to put together the strongest possible application, you have to be a go-getter (or at least act like one). That means getting in touch with professors at your prospective schools and making your research interests and career intentions clear to them. If you've done some thinking about what you want from a graduate program, the faculty will sense your clarity and direction. Don't feel that you need to sound like a professor yourself. Stretching your knowledge to sound wiser than you are is a sure-fire way to appear foolish. If you haven't studied an important area of your field, present it as a topic you're looking forward to learning about. Then try and shift the discussion back to a subject in which you're more conversant. After all, no one is expected to enter grad school already knowing everything there is to know. Remember to stick to the positives when you talk about yourself. Though you should be prepared to discuss your shortcomings, don't volunteer them yourself. Finally, have a clear sense of what you'd like to get out of each conversation. It's best to have a few specific, carefully-chosen questions prepared. Practice discussing your background and interests. Professors will be more likely to advocate for you if you're articulate, friendly and respectful of their time.

3. WRITING THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
Whether or not one should attend graduate school requires serious thought and consideration. It takes focus and determination to pursue an advanced degree. That's why admissions committees examine your statement of purpose very closely—they want to see whether you have the right stuff to succeed in graduate school.

WHAT ARE THEY REALLY ASKING ANYWAY?
Different schools will give you different prompts for the statement of purpose. Nonetheless, they're all asking for the same four pieces of information:

- What you want to study at graduate school?
- Why you want to study it?
- What experience you have in your field?
- What you plan to do with your degree once you have it?

Admissions committees look for candidates with clear, well-defined research interests that arise from experience. With that in mind, your statement should reveal that you care deeply about your chosen discipline and that you have the background to support your ideas and sentiments. It should also demonstrate that you're a diligent student who will remain committed for the long haul. However you approach these points, it's imperative that you answer the questions asked in the essay prompt. Being substantive and direct is much better than being creative or flashy.

AVOID THIS MISTAKE
Grad school applicants commonly make the error of including a paragraph about how well-rounded they are: They're avid ultimate-frisbee players, they write short stories or they love to cook. Colleges are interested in this
stuff; graduate schools are not. Grad schools are looking for great minds who will achieve mastery of a specific subject area. They don't care that you make a great chicken casserole or play intramural bocce ball. They do care about those activities that speak to your suitability for graduate work. As a graduate student, you'll be called upon to do difficult coursework and research. You may have to teach undergraduate classes within your field and conceivably even design a course. And you'll have to get along with a diverse group of colleagues who will sometimes work very closely with you. Any experience in school, work or your extracurricular life that speaks to those abilities is worth talking about.

**MAKE YOUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE UNIQUE**

While it’s important to be focused, there’s no need to be boring. To distinguish your essay, add unique (yet relevant) information. One of the best ways to do this is to discuss, briefly, an idea in your field that turns you on intellectually. It’s an effective essay-opener, and it lets you write about something besides yourself for a bit. Remember, the idea you choose to talk about can tell an admissions committee a lot about you. And it demonstrates your interest in your field, rather than just describing it.

**DON’T FORGET**

Be sure to show your statement of purpose to someone you respect, preferably the professors who are writing your recommendations, and get some feedback on the content before you send it in. If you need to revise it, do so and then ask for more feedback.

Have someone else proofread your essay for spelling and grammar. A fresh set of eyes often picks up something you missed. Better yet, if you have enough willing friends, have a couple of people proofread each statement. Finally, don’t just reuse the same statement of purpose for each school to which you apply. You can recycle the same information, but make sure you change the presentation to fit each school’s individual program.

**4. 4 GRE Myths**

There are the Greek myths, and then there are the GRE myths. We don't have much to say about the first. But we can help bust the second. Disregard these common misconceptions about the GRE and you'll be on your way to admission.

**MYTH #1: GRE scores are not as important as your personal statement and your relationship with faculty members at prospective schools.**

FACT: While the weight placed on your GRE score in relation to other factors (undergraduate GPA, letters of recommendation, relevant experience in your chosen field, etc.) will vary from program to program, poor GREs can seriously hurt your chances of admission. In addition, GRE scores are an important factor when it comes to awarding teaching and research assistantships and merit-based financial aid.

**MYTH #2: The GRE tests complex math concepts.**

FACT: GRE math is tough because of the way the concepts are tested, not because of the concepts themselves. The GRE tests math concepts you learned in the seventh or eighth grade—you won’t see any calculus or trigonometry.

**MYTH #3: You can hone a number of skills to improve your math score, but you can’t really raise your verbal score.**

FACT: The single best way to improve your verbal score is to increase your vocabulary. Antonyms, analogies and sentence completions all rely upon your understanding of the words in the questions and answer choices. If you’re familiar with the definitions, you’ll be able to answer the questions quickly and accurately.

**MYTH #4: All of the questions on the GRE count equally towards your score.**

FACT: The GRE is a computer-adaptive test. This means that unlike paper-and-pencil standardized tests that begin with an easy question and become progressively tougher, the GRE always begins with a question of moderate difficulty. If you get it right, the computer gives you a slightly harder question. If you get it wrong, you’ll receive a slightly easier question. Therefore, questions at the beginning of each section have a greater impact on your score.
5. GRAD SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE

If you're planning to apply to graduate school, it's best to start early.

Applications for most PhD programs are due in December or January, while deadlines for master's programs tend to hit in January, February or March. No matter which degree you pursue, starting early will give you more time to prepare and polish your application.

Applying earlier will also increase your odds of being admitted. Many graduate programs have rolling admissions, so applications are evaluated as they arrive (rather than all at once). Spots fill up as the final deadline draws near.

Here's a sample schedule for a student hoping to enter grad school in the fall. This is a best-case scenario which leaves time to craft a great application, resolve unforeseen problems (a lost transcript, a delinquent recommender) and submit with time to spare. Of course, you'll need to tweak this schedule to fit your schools' deadlines.

May: Begin researching potential schools. Take a practice GRE test. Your score will help you determine how much preparation you'll need for the real deal.

June: If your practice scores weren't too hot, sign up for a GRE test preparation course. Register for the GRE general test if necessary.

July: Request information from schools that interest you.

August: Take the GRE general test. If you're not happy with your scores, sign up to take it again. Begin writing your statement of purpose.

September: Register for the November GRE subject test (if necessary). Finalize your list of prospective schools, and pick a professor or two from each whose research interests mirror your own. Familiarize yourself with their work. Contact your recommenders. Keep polishing your statement of purpose.

October: Request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution. Send your recommenders supplemental materials (like your resume, personal statement, etc.) that they can use as a reference. Make contact with students and professors at your prospective schools. Arrange a campus visit if you can.

November: Have someone in the field and a few smart (and honest) friends read over your personal statement. Take the GRE subject test; make sure that your scores will be sent directly to schools. You can also meet with the Writing Center here at UVA. They will meet with you up to 5 times to help you with your personal statement.

December: Complete and submit all applications, keeping two copies of every section for your records. Verify that your recommendations have been sent.

January: Focus on financial aid—fill out the FAFSA online and look into private loans, grants and fellowships.

February and March: Try to relax while you wait it out. This will probably be the most relaxing time you'll have for the next several years, so enjoy it.

April: Celebrate your acceptances. Appeal the aid package (or apply for alternative loans) if the amount the school offers you doesn't meet your needs.
One final note: Almost every grad school applicant will receive at least one rejection. While that won’t be fun, it’s not quite the final act. Call your contact professors in that department and politely express your regret at not being admitted. Ask them if they can point out where your application was weak or give you some suggestions on how you might strengthen your candidacy in the future. This will help if you choose to re-apply the following year.

6. GRE OVERVIEW

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is a 2.5 hour, multiple-choice, computer-based test required by most graduate schools. It’s run by the Educational Testing Service, the same people who run the SAT.

Schools differ in how they use your GRE score. Some consider it very important, while others view it as a formality. We recommend asking your prospective programs—most will be quite willing to tell you what part the test plays in their admissions decisions.

WHAT’S THE BREAKDOWN OF THE GRE?

The format of the GRE changes from time to time. Visit this site for the most up-to-date information: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content/cbt

HOW IS THE GRE SCORED?

Scoring on the GRE was revised in 2011. For the most up-to-date information on how the GRE is scored, visit: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/scores/

WHAT ARE THE GRE SUBJECT TESTS?

The GRE Subject Tests are similar to SAT IIs, in that they test your knowledge of a particular subject like chemistry or literature. Not every school requires a GRE subject test, but many of the most competitive programs do. ETS offers the tests three times a year—they are not part of the standard GRE.

HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THE GRE?

Start by taking a free online practice test. If your scores need improvement, check out GRE courses and books. To register for the test, visit www.gre.org.

7. MASTER’S VS. PHD PROGRAMS

Master’s programs are designed to give you a solid education in a specialized field. Most master’s candidates spend one to two years earning their degree before returning to the professional world. A handful continue on to earn a PhD.

PhD programs are designed to give you extensive expertise in a specialized field; they train you to pursue a life in academia as a professor or researcher (although many PhDs do not follow this path). Most candidates spend five to six years earning their degree. PhD programs often offer full scholarships and a living stipend. Master’s candidates receive less financial help; in many cases, they receive none at all. Remember that within some programs, you can enroll for a master’s degree and later choose to pursue a PhD if you are so inclined; conversely, you can enroll in a PhD program and leave after earning your master’s if the academic lifestyle fails to entice you further.

THE PATH TO A MASTER’S DEGREE
First year master's students take courses to fulfill degree requirements, just like in college. However, the workload is heavier, the course topics are more specific and much more is expected of you than in college. At the beginning of the master’s program, you choose (or are assigned) a faculty member who will serve as your advisor. This person will help you develop an academic focus and potential topics for your thesis or final project.

As a second-year master’s student, you decide on your research focus and—in one semester or two—complete your master's thesis or final project. If you show promise, you may be encouraged to continue toward a PhD.

**The Path to a PhD**

In the first three years of a PhD program, you take courses to satisfy your degree requirements and gain a broad knowledge of the field. You choose an advisor and write a dissertation proposal, and you develop a working relationship with other professors in your department. Most doctoral students also work as teaching assistants for one or more undergraduate courses during this time, and some work as research assistants.

At the end of the second or third year, PhD students complete a thesis, take comprehensive exams or both. The thesis and/or exams demonstrate your qualification to continue with doctoral work.

In years four through six, you take fewer (or no) courses and focus on writing your dissertation, which is supposed to constitute a new and meaningful contribution to knowledge in your field. Needless to say, this is quite a bit of pressure, and most students spend much of these years in the library. You’re not totally isolated, however—you work closely with your thesis advisor and others in your department to revise and refine your dissertation.

When you’ve finally finished, you are required to present and defend your work before a faculty committee. Rarely does anyone fail a dissertation defense. After all, you should know more about your subject than anyone else in the room. If a committee member does uncover a flaw in your argument, you can generally address it in your revised dissertation.

**Why You Shouldn’t Pursue a PhD**

The road to a doctorate is long, arduous and paved with abandoned scholarship. So before deciding to pursue a PhD, make sure that you love your field of study and will enjoy immersing yourself in it for several years. Successful PhD students are those who thrive in a highly intellectual environment, are willing to work very hard with only a possible payoff, have excellent command of undergraduate coursework and don’t mind forgoing impressive paychecks.

We know we’re playing devil’s advocate, but there are some reasons not to pursue a PhD. Make sure you’ve considered these before making the leap:

**It's a lot of work.**

First-year PhD students usually take around three classes. Graduate courses are far more demanding those you took as an undergrad, and three classes is an extremely heavy workload. Many first-years are also thrust into teaching right away and must learn how to juggle their needs along with their students.

And the workload doesn’t lighten after the first year – you’ll continue taking and teaching courses, and you’ll begin the process of writing a dissertation. In the final three years of the PhD program, you’ll mainly focus on writing the dissertation and preparing for oral exams.

Of course, there is a flip side to all this. Grad students get to manage their own time, and are not tied to an office cubicle. And if you love your subject, you won’t mind all that time in the library.

**You may not make it through.**

Each year, some PhD candidates do not meet the requirements of their graduate programs and are asked to leave. Others choose to leave because they are burnt out, or their interests have changed. Some students who don’t complete the PhD leave with a master’s degree; others leave with no degree at all. We encourage you to make a back-up plan in case you fail to earn a PhD.
You’ll live frugally.
Getting a doctorate is intellectually rewarding. Unfortunately, it doesn’t tend to be financially rewarding, at least not in the short term. Most PhD students live on their earnings from teaching and research assistantships or other low-paying employment. So getting a PhD can mean being a starving student for another five years or more. And unless your specialty is a hot field such as computer science or nanotechnology, you’ll probably find that the job market is even more competitive than you had imagined.

You may struggle to find a good job.
Many PhD students hope to find a tenure-track position at a good college or research university after graduating (although others do pursue careers outside academia). Academic positions are increasingly difficult to come by. There are more PhDs on the job market, and many have to settle for temporary or non-tenure-track teaching positions. If you do find a tenure-track position, it probably won’t be at your dream school. You may have to relocate to a college on the other side of the country if you’re looking for professional fulfillment.

Okay...so why pursue a PhD?
Despite the long hours, low pay and every other drawback we just listed, people stay in doctorate programs because they enjoy learning for learning’s sake. They love intellectual stimulation, and they find academic work fun. Most PhD students think researchers and academics have it made because they get paid to tackle intellectual problems and explore new areas of knowledge. If this sounds like you, then it’s absolutely the right choice to pursue a PhD.

**PhD Q & A: Finding Success as a Scholar**

We interviewed PhD students from several schools around the country to find out about their experiences getting in, getting adjusted, and getting the most from their programs. The students are from a diverse range of fields; all are recent PhD recipients or current PhD candidates. Here’s what they had to say about finding success as a scholar, in grad school and beyond.

**What was the smartest move you made during your program? What do you wish you had done differently?**

*Bioengineering:* I think my smartest move was getting to know several faculty members on campus besides my own research advisor. Not only do other faculty members often have great insight into research problems, they can also be reference-letter writers—and most academic jobs require four or five references! Looking back, I wish I had not stressed so much about first-year classes and general exams. They really had no bearing on the success of my PhD program.

*Computer science:* I wish I had gotten my classes out of the way as soon as possible. If you’re coming straight out of college, you might be tired of classes and eager to get involved in research, but, later in your career, you will find it tiresome to continue taking classes.

**Are there any special perks of being a PhD student that you recommend taking advantage of?**

*Bioengineering:* Attending research conferences becomes a great excuse to travel the world. I have had the chance to see places that I never would have had I decided to go straight into industry instead of pursuing a PhD.

**Do you have any tips for post-graduation job placement success?**
Bioengineering: Your advisor plays a key role in your post-graduation job placement success, especially if your goal is to land a job in academia. Often the only difference between the candidate who gets the job and the one who doesn’t is that the hiring committee knows the successful candidate (or his or her pedigree) better than the other. For this reason it is so important for your advisor to help get your name out to his or her colleagues and create a “buzz.” Of course, at the end of the day, you have to prove there is substance behind the hype.

Computer science: It’s important to have publications at the big conferences and to meet influential people in your field.

**WHAT ARE NON-ACADEMIC CAREERS THAT GRADUATES OF YOUR PROGRAM PURSUE?**

Bioengineering: The biotechnology sector is rapidly expanding, providing many opportunities in industry for PhD graduates.

Computer science: Research labs (e.g., Sun, IBM) are a frequent target.

**8. TESTING THE WATER: ARE YOU READY FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL?**

For many people, going to graduate school is a great move. It can deliver a vital intellectual wake-up call or start you on the path to a new, more satisfying career. It can even increase your earning power (once you pay off those student loans, of course).

But attending graduate school can also be a mistake. If you don’t know why you’re going, or don’t have the focus to succeed once you’re there, grad school can leave you with a whole lot of debt—and not much else. Make sure that you’re choosing a program because it makes sense within a larger plan and not simply because you’re frustrated with your current job or unsure of the next step.

Here are some questions to consider as you make your choice.

**DO I KNOW WHAT I WANT TO STUDY?**

You don’t need to know the exact topic of your dissertation or master’s thesis before you apply. But you should have a clear sense of your field of interest, and you should feel confident that you’ll be able to study this field without growing bored. The more specific you can get about your interests, the stronger your application will be. If you’re considering earning your masters degree in communications, it will help to pinpoint a particular interest such as broadcast journalism; if you’re applying for a PhD in English, try to identify a focus such as 19th-century American literature. If you don’t yet have a clear sense of what you would like to concentrate on, take some time to meditate on the topic and hold off on applications till you feel confident about your choice.

**WHAT ARE MY PROSPECTS AFTER GRAD SCHOOL?**

Though you may not want to start thinking already about what comes after grad school (getting there in the first place seems stressful enough), this question could prove the most crucial when deciding whether or not to return to school. Research your chosen area and contact professors or other knowledgeable advisors about what you’ll actually be able to do with your degree after graduation. Some fields are a no-brainer: Law, business and medical schools attract so many applicants because they provide solid promises of careers after graduation. The PhD track often leads to a career in academia (though academic jobs are growing increasingly few and far between in proportion to the number of doctoral candidates). Other fields provide less career certainty: An MFA in fiction writing or a master's degree in art history promises to be intellectually enriching but may offer limited practical returns.
AM I FINANCIALLY PREPARED?
If you've recently come into an inheritance or your trust fund is burning a hole in your pocket, you can skip this question. For the rest of us, the financial repercussions of attending graduate school will have an impact on the decision to return. While most PhD programs are fully funded—and might also grant you a stipend to cover living expenses—master's programs offer less financial assistance and often require taking out loans to cover your tuition and/or the cost of living. Of course, this is no reason to back away from the graduate school plan. A well-chosen program is an investment in your future, and, theoretically, you will be able to pay back your loans when you have become professionally established. And keep in mind that many schools do offer financial aid, merit scholarships and student loans with manageable interest rates. If you are thinking of attending a master's program, you can also look into the possibility of going to school part-time while you hold down a job to cover the rent.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED TO APPLY?
The calendar for graduate admissions varies. Applications for most PhD programs are due in December or January while deadlines for master's programs tend to be in January, February or March. No matter which program you choose, you'll most likely need to allow more than a couple of months to get your applications in order. Taking the GRE or any other standardized test; asking professors for recommendations; writing your personal statement; and researching schools and deciding where you will apply—these all require planning and focus. You might be able to scrape together your applications if you decide to take the plunge in November, but you'll be happier with your application package if you start preparations in August or September.

SHOULD I PANIC IF I'VE BEEN OUT OF SCHOOL FOR SEVERAL YEARS?
No way. Many programs appreciate candidates who have taken some time to put their careers in perspective—and might even prefer them. If you're nervous about getting back into the academic swing of things, take a deep breath. Before you know it, you'll be highlighting and note-taking like a pro. If you are really nervous, you can ease your transition by taking a class or two as a non-matriculated student in your field of study before heading back to the classroom full-time as a degree-seeking student.

9. PAYING FOR YOUR EDUCATION


Financial Aid Explained
Student Dependency Status
When Cost Is a Factor
What You Need to Know About Scholarships
Am I an eligible non-citizen?
Independent Students and Financial Aid
How Does Federal Student Aid Work?
Early Decision and Financial Aid
Federal Student Aid Eligibility
Federal Grants
Need-Based Aid Vs. Merit-Based Aid
Federal Student Loans
Financial Aid and Admissions: Two Separate Processes

Federal Aid and Drug Convictions
FAFSA 101

Taking Action
Avenues (and some side streets) for Getting More Aid
Unmet Need and Private Loans
Appealing Your Award Package
Searching for Scholarships
Comparing Award Packages
Federal Student Aid Timeline
National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test: A.K.A. the PSAT
Paying the Bill with a Stafford Loan

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS TO U.S. GRADUATE SCHOOLS
For international students hoping to attend graduate school in the United States, the application process can seem a little intimidating. The key to getting in is to stay organized and ask for help when you need it.
International students and domestic students go through the same application process. If you are a foreign applicant, however, there are a few extra things you should do:

**Realistically assess your ability to do well in a program conducted entirely in English.** Graduate programs require a substantial amount of reading, writing and speaking. If you're not completely comfortable comprehending English, you'll have problems completing a course of study.

**Make sure you have enough money to pay for school and living expenses.** While some graduate programs give financial aid and grants to foreign students, some do not. Be sure you can cover all your costs (including plane tickets home for vacations) if you don't receive a grant.

**Know the deadlines.** Be sure you know when all parts of your application are due, and send everything in as early as possible. If you live abroad, it may take several weeks for applications to reach you and a few more weeks for any materials you send to reach the school.

**Find out the transcript requirements.** You'll probably need transcripts from every university you attended. Also, most graduate programs require you to submit a transcript evaluation along with your actual transcript. A transcript evaluation allows admissions officers to assess your undergraduate coursework and equate it to U.S. standards. There are fee-based services that provide these evaluations. Investigate them early and thoroughly.

**Take the TOEFL.** Unless you're a native English speaker or earned an undergraduate degree from an American university, you will probably be required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). For more information about the TOEFL, check out The Princeton Review's TOEFL Test Preparation or visit www.toefl.org.

**Prepare thoroughly for the GRE.** The majority of graduate programs in the United States require that you take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). While you can take the test more than once, most schools prefer to see no more than two or three scores on your score report. Don’t use the actual exam for practice. Instead, take a free online practice GRE.

**Write, rewrite and rewrite your** statement of purpose. Have a native English speaker read it to make sure you haven't made any major mistakes. Do NOT, however, get someone else to write your statement for you. You will be immediately rejected if (and when) you are caught.

**Begin the application for a student visa immediately after you're accepted.** If you're late in applying for a visa, you could miss the first few weeks of classes. Your program will be able to help you with the paperwork. You will probably need to prove that you have the funds for at least one year of study in order to obtain your visa.