



**6** *insider* **TIPS** TO APPLY  
TO **GRADUATE SCHOOL**  
WITH EASE

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By Shawna-Kaye Lester

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# 6 *insider* **TIPS** TO APPLY TO **GRADUATE SCHOOL** WITH EASE

1. **START YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS BY WRITING DOWN YOUR TOP THREE LIFE GOALS**  
and how going to graduate school will help you to accomplish them.
2. **ALLOT AT LEAST A YEAR TO PREPARE AND APPLY.**
3. **RESEARCH SCHOOLS THOROUGHLY**  
and come up with a short list
4. **ORGANIZE YOUR PROCESS**  
and assemble your “application dream team”.
5. **GET CLEAR ON WHY YOU SHOULD BE ADMITTED**  
and ensure every aspect of your application communicates that message.
6. **Apply, and then *celebrate!***

# 1. START YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS BY WRITING DOWN YOUR TOP 3 LIFE GOALS AND HOW GOING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL WILL HELP YOU TO ACCOMPLISH THEM.

→ Identifying and staying focused on why you want to go to grad school will keep you motivated throughout your application process, even when it gets challenging.

→ Examining your short- and long-term goals will allow you to identify the conditions a graduate school must meet for you to apply and enroll there.

For example

**GOAL: Launch a boutique cybersecurity consulting agency in Boston three years from today.**

**WHY GRAD SCHOOL?:** A master's degree in Cybersecurity and Risk Management will give me credibility when I launch my business. Also, a school with intimate classes will help me to meet potential business partners and staff for my company from my cohort of classmates.

**GOAL: Pay off my \$40,000 in undergraduate student loans six years from today.**

**WHY GRAD SCHOOL:** Earning an MBA on scholarship (condition) and getting hired before graduation will enable me to have an extra \$100,000 in discretionary income annually.

## 2. ALLOT AT LEAST A YEAR TO PREPARE AND APPLY.

- Once you start thinking about applying, start researching all the major tasks you will have to complete.
- It will take you at least a year to properly prepare for and apply to grad school. In some cases, such as when you have a rigorous standardized test and don't test well, it will take longer. If you have less than a year and you would like a personalized timeline to get everything done, [set up a time here to talk with me.](#)

### For example

- To get into medical school, you will need to complete the qualifying college-level coursework, take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), and gain experience in medical settings. This will take you several years to accomplish.
- It is not uncommon to need to retake qualifying standardized tests like the MCAT, Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and Graduate Record Examination (GRE). **Some clients delay their application by an entire year because they need more time to prepare for one of these tests, or they have to retake them.**

### 3. RESEARCH SCHOOLS THOROUGHLY AND COME UP WITH A SHORT LIST.

→ Start your research by reading broadly: Look on LinkedIn to find out where the leaders in your field studied, search online to discover which graduate programs are offered in your local environment and which programs are known for having a quality curriculum in your chosen field. Also, scour schools' websites for admitted students' profiles and class profiles. Then create a short list that includes places you are overqualified for, ones you are a competitive candidate for, and a few that seem a bit out of your league.

→ Research the nitty-gritty and ensure that each school provides what you need. Every school on your short list must be a place you would attend if admitted, and should complement your short- and long-term goals.

#### For example

→ You have an undergraduate GPA of 2.7/4.0, a GRE score of 300/340, and three months' experience in hotel administration—a master's program where the median GPA of the incoming class is 3.5 and the median GRE score is 325 is a bit out of your league. However, you would be a competitive candidate for this school if you had a GPA of 3.3, a GRE score of 340, and three years' experience in hotel administration in a well-known hotel chain.

→ The nitty-gritty includes the length of the course, the size of each incoming class, the teaching style, internship and research opportunities, available scholarships and financial aid, and paths to jobs after graduation. Be sure to speak with a few recent alumni (graduated 1–2 years ago) to hear their thoughts on the program.

## 4. ORGANIZE YOUR PROCESS AND ASSEMBLE YOUR "APPLICATION DREAM TEAM".

→ Create a timeline outlining the period you've allotted for the application process and what you will focus on each month. If you want to create a customized timeline so you can stay on track, [click here for a free consultation and we'll get started.](#)

→ To have a successful application, you will need others to help you. Thoroughly research who can help you to get the results you want.

### For example

→ If you have already successfully completed the qualifying college-level coursework for medical school, create a two-year timeline for applying. In year one, focus on getting the highest possible score on your MCAT while you volunteer at a community health center. Your year two timeline would include times to contact your potential recommenders, to prepare a list of your achievements and experiences to help your recommenders give you strong and positive letters, to write and edit your main personal statement, to update your CV, to respond to emails from your recommenders, to interview alums of schools you are considering, and to complete your secondary applications.

→ Plan to complete your applications a month before their due dates. For schools with rolling admissions, apply as early as possible *once you have a strong application*, so that you have the best possible odds of being admitted.

→ Your dream team would include a mentor (someone who is on the same journey as you, but is some steps ahead and invested in your success), your recommenders, a backup recommender in case your top choices don't deliver, an admissions consultant, a writing expert, a test prep tutor, and friends who can encourage you and serve as a second set of eyes or a listening ear whenever you are in a bind.

## 5. GET CLEAR ON WHY YOU SHOULD BE ADMITTED AND ENSURE EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR APPLICATION COMMUNICATES THAT MESSAGE.

→ Understand the strengths and weaknesses you bring to the table. Then highlight your strengths and frame your weaknesses as positively as possible. To be a competitive graduate school applicant, having experience in your field is a strength, and not having it is a serious weakness.

→ Create a “Main Message” for your application—this is the reason you are worthy of being chosen above every other applicant, even if the pool is competitive. Then include aspects of this Main Message in your personal statements and CV, and ask that your recommenders include it in their letters. If you would like help to create your Main Message, I would love to talk with you.

[Book a time here.](#)

### For example

→ Let's say you wish to pursue an MPH in Biostatistics, but in college, you majored in politics and minored in mathematics, and for the past four years since graduation, you have been working in management consulting. In addition, you have no direct experience in public health. However, when properly framed, it is clear your demanding schedule as a consultant has prepared you to handle the rigorous coursework you will do in your master's program, the data analysis skills you have gained on the job are applicable to biostatistics, and your background in politics makes you appreciate the importance of hard data in influencing political action that can have a lasting impact on public health.

→ Your Main Message would point out that your particular experiences in politics and consulting, data analysis prowess, and gap in health care knowledge altogether make you perfectly positioned to both contribute to and gain tremendously from your dream school's MPH in Biostatistics program. immensely from your dream school's MPH in Biostatistics program.

## 6. APPLY, AND THEN *celebrate!*

- Fill out each school's application weeks in advance of its due date – **follow their formatting and submission instructions exactly.**
- When asked if you would like to waive your right to see your letters of recommendation, choose yes.
- Thank your team.
- Go celebrate.

### For example

- If your school asks you to submit a 750-word personal statement and a CV of no more than two pages, with your name at the top of each page, your application can be tossed aside if you submit a 900-word statement or do not add your name to each page.
- Recommendation letters that you waive the right to see are regarded as objective and honest, because whoever wrote them did so without the pressure of thinking you might one day see the letter.
- Send everyone who supported you a card or something else they would like, so that they will be willing to support you in the future and know that you appreciated their help.
- Do a fun activity or go out to dinner. Learn to find joy in the journey instead of anxiously waiting to get to the destination!



# Hi there!

I'm Shawna-Kaye Lester, Founder of Memorable Essay®.

I help ambitious graduate school applicants like you stand out in a sea of competition and get into your dream school, so that you can use your education to impact the world and create a legacy you're proud of.



→ Since 2007, I have helped over 400 clients win **MORE THAN US\$ 6 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS** to top schools around the world.

→ My graduate school clients have cracked the code for schools that include the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies; Cornell School of Hotel Administration; NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; Teachers College, Columbia University; and University of Oxford. Their **SCHOLARSHIP WINS** include *The Consortium Fellowship (NYU Stern School of Business)* and *the Schwarzman Scholars program (Tsinghua University)*.

**For the 2017–2018 application season, 75% of my private graduate school admissions consulting clients were admitted to one of their top two programs with a partial or full-tuition scholarship.**

It feels like not too long ago, I was in your shoes, considering graduate school. After completing my undergraduate degree at Bates College, I earned master's degrees from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and Mailman School of Public Health.

During grad school, I lived in student housing with peers attending universities all across New York. **Word got out that, "Shawna-Kaye can help you with your**

**application.”** When the demand became too high, I started to charge for my services. And now, I am thrilled that my full-time job is helping graduate school applicants like you knock the socks off admissions committees!

### **ABOUT MEMORABLE ESSAY® GRADUATE ADMISSIONS CONSULTING**

You are ready to go to graduate school to learn more and earn more. But even though you are taking small steps, you feel overwhelmed by the whole process. You know if someone could show you, step by step, how to get your application done, you could do it.

If you're tired of spinning your wheels, procrastinating, and haphazardly jumping from one task to the next, I want to help.

*Memorable Essay® Graduate Admissions Consulting is highly personalized, professional, and proven support to help you **get what you most want: an***

***acceptance letter from your dream school.***

✓ **You get a tailored, step-by-step application strategy** to go from feeling overwhelmed to having a final list of schools that are a perfect fit for your short- and long-term career and life goals.

✓ **You have one-on-one help** so you stop struggling to write your personal statements and essays, and start writing ones that makes you unforgettable.

✓ **Your CV is revamped** so it shows why you're ready to be on campus.

✓ You learn how to **help your recommenders write moving letters about you** – all to increase your chances of getting the opportunity of a lifetime.

***If you're ready to step up and get closer to registering for your first semester of classes on your dream campus, I would love to help you make it happen!***

[Book a time here](#) to find out how we can work together so you can say, “I got in!”

**CLICK HERE AND BOOK A TIME TO CHAT**



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