Undergraduate Psychology Program Time Line - Planning Ahead for Graduate School

*(material taken from Getting In: A Step-by-Step plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1997.)*  
**Freshman and Sophomore Year:**  
1. Take core courses, such as introduction to psychology (PSYC 100), statistics (PSYC 205), and research methods (PSYC 202). Your advisor will help you keep track of the core course requirements.

2. Enroll in courses helpful for your areas of interest in graduate school, including biological sciences, mathematics, writing and public speaking.  
  
**Junior Year (or before):**  
1. Start reading about careers in psychology- Explore your interests with faculty.

2. Take more advanced psychological courses.

3. Meet with one or more psychology professors to determine the electives in math, science, computer science, psychology and other areas that might be an asset in applying to graduate school.

4. Find out faculty research interests at your school, read their articles and make acquaintance with those whose work interests you.

5. Take a class or two with the professors identified above: volunteer or apply to assist them in their research (the latter will give you invaluable experience and is also a way of letting your professors get to know you as a prelude to your asking for letters of recommendation). (Remember - Independent Study credit hours are required for the B.S. degree at LHU.)

6. Consider getting research and other field-related experiences pertinent to those areas of psychology you are interested in.

7. Find out if you are qualified to join Psi Chi and any other professional organizations

8. Find out about state, regional, and national psychology conferences. If able, attend those that interest you.

9. Begin to acquaint yourself with graduate programs that appeal to you and familiarize yourself with typical requirements, offerings, and policies.

10. Send away for bulletins for the [GREs](http://www.ets.org/gre/) and MAT. Use study guides or attend a course to prepare. Take practice exams to estimate what your score may be.   
  
**Application Year**  
Summer Before Senior Year   
  
1. Continue to study for, and take the GRE’s or plan to take them in September.

2. Compile a preliminary list of programs that offer the area of concentration, degree, and training model that appeals to you.

3. Contact those programs that seem a good match to obtain additional information about the program and about financial aid. Ask for an application packet. Study this information carefully.

4. Call the financial aid offices of all the schools you will be applying to. Ask for an information packet about the aid available to graduate students, as well as any forms you will need to complete to be considered for financial aid. Ask if there is anyone else you should be talking to regarding other potential sources of aid.

5. Go to the [career center](http://www.lhup.edu/career) or [library](http://www.lhup.edu/library) at LHU to research financial aid opportunities in addition to the ones offered by the universities to which you are applying.

6. Plan and schedule your application strategy. Pay careful attention to application deadlines, particularly with regard to financial aid, which often has earlier deadlines than admission applications.

7. Calculate application fees and make sure you have enough money to cover them (some schools waive this fee because of financial hardship; this needs to be checked with each individual school).

8. Begin planning how you will obtain money for any pre-selection interviews you may be required to attend.  
  
September of Senior Year

1. Apply in the first week of September (or earlier) to take the GRE’s in October and to take the next scheduled MAT (if necessary).

2. Submit a request for your undergraduate transcript, which you will include in your packet for those who will write letters of recommendation. Inspect it for any errors or omissions.

3. Prepare a resume for the same purpose.

4. Begin to finalize your decision regarding which professors to ask to write these letters.

5. Begin thinking about the various essay questions each program requires. Allow time for your ideas to germinate.  
  
October  
  
1. Take the GRE’s and the MAT; request that ETS forward your scores to all of the institutions you are applying to. Begin contacting individuals from whom you might request letters of recommendation.

2. Begin filling out your financial aid and application forms. Write first drafts of essays; ask for feedback from others.  
  
November and December  
  
1. Request that your undergraduate transcript(s) be sent to all of the institutions you are applying to. Make sure that your transcripts will be sent by your earliest application deadline.

2. Finalize financial aid forms.

3. Finalize application forms.

4. Write the final drafts of essays.

5. Supply individuals who will write your letters of recommendation with the packet you prepared earlier; including forms sent by each school and necessary postage.

6. Carefully prepare each application for mailing. Be sure to photocopy each in its entirety. Consider registered mail if you can afford it.   
  
January and February  
  
1. Practice and prepare for possible pre-selection interviews. Be prepared for surprise telephone interviews.

2. Contact professors whom you have asked to submit letters of recommendation. Confirm that they were sent and thank those who sent them.

3. Verify that your completed applications were received.

4. Attend any interviews you are invited to.  
  
March  
  
*Accepting and declining offers:*1. As soon as you have two offers in hand, choose the one that you prefer (you do not have to formally accept just yet unless it is actually your first choice) and decline the other offers promptly.

2. As you receive each new offer, repeat this procedure. That is, hold the preferred choice in reverse, and formally decline the less attractive offer.

3. As soon as you receive the offer that you want most accept it and notify immediately any programs from which offers are pending that you are no longer considering their programs.  
  
April  
  
1. Finalize your financial arrangements for attending graduate school.

2. Call or write the people who wrote your letters of recommendation and inform them of the outcome.

3. CELEBRATE (or regroup)!