

GRAD SCHOOL: TO GO OR NOT TO GO

Grad school might look like a safe haven when the economy is tough, but there is a lot to consider before making the leap: finances, timing, motivation, the application process, job placement rates, etc. The decision to pursue graduate level study should not be taken lightly. Give your decision careful consideration, weighing all the factors, including:

Your Motivation

Can't think of what else to do next? Don't think of graduate school as a way to hide from the job search. You face wasting a lot of resources. Don't go to graduate school if you're not passionate about the field. Go because you're passionate and you want to develop your skill set in a certain area.

Your Career Path

What do you truly want to do? What excites you more than anything? If it's a profession you absolutely, positively must pursue, and it requires advanced education, then you're probably an excellent candidate for further education. During graduate school you become an expert in a certain area to be a professional within the industry.

Your Marketability to an Employer

Not every profession requires an advanced degree, so do some research on potential career opportunities before committing to more education. For some programs, a student must have prior related experience in order to thrive in the environment. Moreover, upon graduation, the student may find himself or herself over-educated and under-experienced.

Investment of Time, Money, and Energy

Graduate students find out very quickly that their days of student life events, general education courses, and hanging out with friends are over—graduate school is, well, about school.

Are You Ready To Commit?

Also consider your post-undergraduate life plans. Are marriage and family in your immediate future? Graduate school can put a huge financial strain on a young couple already facing student loan debt, not to mention the burden of the time you'll be spending studying. Be sure you—and your family—are ready for the added responsibility of a few more years of schooling.

Opportunities within the Field

If you do plan to work before going back for that advanced degree, will more education help you move up the ranks at your company? Have you landed a job in your undergraduate area of study, and now you're thinking you want to enhance what you've learned, or pursue a totally new field? Depending on your professional career path, advanced education may help you reach your career goals.

Post-Reading Reflections

Write down three reasons why you think you should go to graduate or professional school and three reasons why you should postpone or forego this goal.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

After considering the above areas, answer the following questions:

1. How will graduate school impact your marketability to future employers: will grad school help you or hurt you?
2. Is it better to go directly to grad school from your undergraduate program? What do you gain and what do you give up?
3. What questions should you ask grad school and professional representatives at a graduate school fair, a law school forum, and so forth?

Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#).