

Graduate School Reflection and Self-Inventory

1. How would you describe your interest in graduate school? What fields, areas, or graduate programs do you find intriguing?

2. Who—on campus or off—would be a good person to talk to about your field of interest?

3. Does your chosen career field require an advanced degree for entrance? Will a degree enhance your marketability later as a seasoned professional? What is the terminal degree in your field of interest?

4. What is the job market currently like in your field of interest?

5. Describe your dream graduate school/program: Would you like to pursue a graduate degree on a full time or part time basis? In what part of the country would you like to live? In what kind of city or town? What is your ideal community like?

6. List some questions you have about graduate school:

Searching for a Graduate Program

1. Ask experts: faculty and professionals in your field
2. Make a list of potential schools and compare:
 - Reputation of the school, its programs, and faculty
 - Research and scholarly opportunities
 - Program job placement rates and information
 - Financial aid
 - Location and cost of living
3. Visit schools
 - Make appointments to meet with faculty and/or admissions office.
 - Some schools may be able to pay your travel expenses.
 - Gather information about community & housing options.
 - Talk to other grad students.

An Application Timeline

Now/As Soon as Possible

- Talk to GC professors and professionals in your field
- Target specific programs and find application deadlines.
- Subtract 3 months to determine your GRE and application preparation deadline and 1 month to determine your mailing deadline
- Investigate when and where to take the GRE (<http://www.ets.org/>)

3 months before published deadlines

- Take GRE and/or other standardized tests
- Ask for letters of recommendation.
- Begin preparing application materials (forms, personal statement, transcripts)

1 month before published deadlines

- Mail application and send transcripts

How Will Admissions Committees Evaluate My Application?

The Admissions process varies by discipline and institution; it is usually based on the following factors:

- Your statement of purpose
- Letters of recommendation
- Standardized test scores (GRE, etc.)
- TOEFL (international students)
- Grade point average
- Transcripts & resume
- Research experience
- Work and life experience

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

- Make requests courteously and early.
- Allow ample time for them to complete letters.
- Provide faculty with copy of your statement of purpose and resume.
- Write thank-you notes.
- Let them know when you get accepted!

Preparing a Personal Statement

Write a one- or two-page statement (as directed by the admissions packet or materials):

- What are your specific goals for graduate study?
- How have you been prepared academically?
- What experience has helped you prepare?
- What are your goals beyond graduate study?
- Answer specific questions required by each school.

Important Tips:

1. Start with specific, vivid story or narrative.
2. Demonstrate your points by providing **concrete examples** from your life experience. Explain why you are uniquely suited to be an asset to their program.
3. Tailor each statement to the school you are sending it to. Mention faculty (and their work), programs, journals, and institutes by name. Show that you've done your homework
4. Have your statement reviewed by faculty mentors.

Characteristics of a Good Personal Statement

But before you write a single word, make sure you know what is expected of a successful college essay. A good essay...

-Is thoughtful and honest

A strong personal statement is reflective; that is, it demonstrates that you have thought about and gained a clear perspective on your experiences and what you want in your future. It does not simply tell a reader what you think he/she wants to know. Instead, it gives the reader a vivid and compelling picture of you--in essence, telling the reader what he or she should know about you. Remember that the focus of the essay is YOU--your achievements, your obstacles, your goals, your values.

-Strives for depth, not breadth

A good essay is not a list of your accomplishments. Remember when your mom told you that it's quality, not quantity that counts? Well, the same adage applies for your college essay. A reader will be much more interested in how your experience demonstrates the theme of your essay, not the number of accomplishments you can list. What is NOT interesting: an essay that devotes one paragraph each to a variety of different topics. This type of approach denies you the ability to give depth to your essay.

-Follows the conventions of good writing

A good essay uses appropriate grammar and syntax, uses precise and vivid language, and does not contain any spelling errors.

-Conforms to guidelines

If the essay instructions tell you that the essay should be two pages long, on white 8.5x11 inch paper, then the essay should be two pages long, on white 8.5x11 inch paper. Less is not more, and more is not better either.

-Answers the question!

A good essay is the result of a writer who has examined the essay question and written an essay that explicitly addresses that question. For example, if you are asked to describe your greatest accomplishment or any unusual circumstances or challenges you have faced, then your reader will expect you to use vivid language that will enable the reader to visualize your accomplishment and share your sense of success.

-Benefits from several drafts and feedback from others

Revision allows an essay to grow. Revising is not editing; revising is the act of "re-seeing" and of looking for those parts of the essay that would benefit from more explication, more (or less) vivid language, or even deleting parts that simply don't work to move your primary theme forward. Similarly, feedback from others can help you identify those parts of the essay that work well--and those that don't.

-Contains a catchy introduction that will keep the reader interested

It is important to recognize that essay readers will read hundreds, maybe even thousands, of essays during the application review period. That means that an essay with a catchy introduction, one that gets right to the point and uses precise language and vivid imagery, is going to stand out more than an essay that is predictable and conventional in its opener.

-Transforms blemishes into positives

It's okay to have flaws! The essay is your chance to show how you have transformed blemishes. For example, if your essay theme is "overcoming obstacles" and you earned a poor grade in a class, but went to a community college at night to repeat the course, it is important for your reader to know this because it is an example of your perseverance. The reader does not want to hear complaints about poor grades or circumstances, but rather wants to know how you have overcome them.

-Demonstrates your knowledge of the major/college

No one expects you to know everything about the college or university to which you are applying. However, readers will want to know that you have done your homework. For example, if you write an essay that states your interest in becoming an engineer, but the college does not have an engineering program, then you haven't done your homework.

-Exudes confidence--you will be successful no matter what

A good essay doesn't beg or brag. Colleges and universities want to admit the best students, and the best students are those who can demonstrate their ability to pursue their goals regardless of where they are admitted. Think of this as quiet confidence--the kind that reveals itself through your description of lifelong interests, sustained commitment, and/or perseverance in the face of adversity. Keep these characteristics of a good essay in mind as you compose. And be sure to avoid the typical college essay blunders.

GRE® General Test Overview

What Is It?

The GRE® General Test measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are not related to any specific field of study.

Verbal Reasoning — the skills measured include the test taker's ability to

- analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it
- analyze relationships among component parts of sentences
- recognize relationships between words and concepts

Quantitative Reasoning — the skills measured include the test taker's ability to

- understand basic concepts of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and data analysis
- reason quantitatively & solve problems in a quantitative setting

Analytical Writing — the skills measured include the test taker's ability to

- articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively
- examine claims and accompanying evidence
- support ideas with relevant reasons and examples
- sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion
- control the elements of standard written English

Scoring (200-800 for Quantitative & Verbal Reasoning, 0-6 for Analytical Writing)

The GRE is graded on a preset curve so that your scaled score will correspond to a certain percentile. An overall score of 630, for example, approximately corresponds to the 90th percentile, meaning that 90% of test takers scored at or below this level. Percentiles may vary from year to year.

96-99 th percentile	720
79-90 th percentile	630
61-75 th percentile	570
37-50 th percentile	500

The importance of your GRE scores varies from graduate school to graduate school and from field to field. State schools often have minimum GRE score requirements. More competitive programs and certain technical majors, such as Engineering, will often put more value on the GRE score.

Who Takes It and Why?

Prospective graduate applicants take the General Test. GRE® test scores are used by admissions or fellowship panels to supplement undergraduate records and other qualifications for graduate study. The scores provide common measures for comparing the qualifications of applicants and aid in evaluating grades and recommendations.

Where Do People Take It?

The \$160 General Test is offered year-round at computer-based test centers in the U.S., Canada, and many other countries. The nearest center to GC is in Mishawaka at the Prometric Test Center (574) 254-1055. It is also offered at paper-based test centers in areas of the world where computer-based testing is not available. Tests are valid for five years.

Unofficial scores of the verbal and quantitative reasoning can be viewed at the test center but not the analytical writing section since it is an essay. You will receive test results within two weeks. Scores are sent to four designated schools for free within four to six weeks; additional scores cost \$20 each.

Who Accepts It?

Any accredited graduate, business or professional school, or any department or division within a school, may require or recommend that its applicants take the General Test, a Subject Test, or both. If approved by the GRE® Board, a non-accredited institution can also receive test takers' scores.

GRE® Subject Tests Overview

What Are They?

The GRE® Subject Tests gauge undergraduate achievement in the eight disciplines listed below. Each Subject Test is intended for students who have majored in or have extensive background in that specific area.

- [Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology](#)
- [Biology](#)
- [Chemistry](#)
- [Computer Science](#)
- [Literature in English](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Physics](#)
- [Psychology](#)

Who Takes Them and Why?

Prospective graduate applicants take the Subject Tests. GRE test scores are used by admissions or fellowship panels to supplement undergraduate records and other qualifications for graduate study.

The scores provide common measures for comparing the qualifications of applicants and aid in the evaluation of grades and recommendations. Some Subject Tests yield subscores that can indicate the strengths and weaknesses of individual students' preparation and may be useful for guidance and placement purposes.

Revisions to GRE exam starting August 1, 2011

http://www.ets.org/gre/revise_general/know

Test fees and related services: <http://www.ets.org/gre/general/about/fees/>

Current GRE Exam (2010) vs. Revised GRE Exam (Aug, 2011)

GRE Exam	Current GRE Exam	Revised GRE Exam
Design	Test questions change based on answers (Computer-Adaptive Test)	Ability to change answers Ability to mark answers and come back (Multi-Stage Test) Ability to use a calculator
Structure	* Current Structure	* Revised Structure
Time	Approx. 3 hours	Approx. 3 hours 45 min.
Scoring	Scores range from 200-800 in 10-point increments	Scores range from 130-170 in 1-point increments
Verbal	Current Verbal Reasoning Details Question Types: Analogies Antonyms Sentence Completions Reading Comprehension	Revised Verbal Reasoning Details Question Types: Reading Comprehension Text Completion Sentence Equivalence
Quantitative	Current Quantitative Reasoning Details Question Types: Multiple Choice Quantitative Comparison Multiple Choice Problem Solving	Revised Quantitative Reasoning Details Question Types: Multiple-choice Questions - One Answer Multiple-choice Questions - One or More Answers Numeric Entry Questions Quantitative Comparison Questions
Writing	Current Analytical Writing Details One Issue Essay One Argument Essay	Revised Analytical Writing Details One Issue Essay One Argument Essay

*Visit [/www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre) for more details

Online resources for GRE preparation

gre.org

Official site of the GRE. Free general test preparation materials, including *Powerprep* software – two computer-based GRE General Tests, sample analytical writing topics, scored sample essays and reader commentary, test-taking strategies, a math review, and test tutorials. After registering for the GRE, download the free software to prepare for the computer-based GRE General Test.

PrincetonReview.com

Excellent advice on all aspects of graduate school. Free practice test.

Petersons.com

Information specifically for students regarding choosing a school, financial aid, and admission tests. Free practice test.

GradSchools.com

An excellent resource for graduate information on over 49,000 graduate school programs. Perform searches by subject area.

Goshen.edu/careerserv/students/graduate-school/

GC's web pages with advice by department.

Number2.com

Free online test preparation.

800score.com

Take free sample exams, learn test strategies, and get preparation software for immediate downloading.

mygretutor.com

Three full-length computer adaptive practice tests, with analysis and math question review.

4testprep.com

Test prep and advice for all graduate school admissions tests.