

I have an interview for a graduate program... now what do I do?

Congratulations! Typically, institutions interview only 3-6 individuals for each slot, so your odds are looking good!

Most programs begin scheduling these interviews in January. Although some programs can help pay the cost of your plane ticket, and can give you housing with a graduate student, most of the time, you will be paying these costs yourself. Because flights are often delayed in winter, it is a good idea to pack your suit in your carryon, so that if you lose your luggage, you will still have it.

If you have several offers of interviews, you may find that some of your interview dates conflict. You should be sensitive to the difficulties the program faces—they must compete with other schools for students, and they have only a short period of time in which to make a decision. If you find that you have a scheduling conflict, you can ask whether there are alternative dates, see if a Skype interview is possible, or ask for an informal interview. Be sure to communicate to the school whether this request reflects your level of interest in the school—they will be eager to offer your spot to another student if you are not interested in their program.

Many students believe that they will be quizzed on statistics or facts during the interview—this is not the case! To prepare for your interview, you should create a list of questions you would like to ask during the interview. These questions should convey that you know what you are getting into, that you know what graduate training will involve, that you are enthusiastic about the opportunity, and that you have done your homework to learn about the program as much as possible.

Prior to the interview, you should carefully read the program's handbook, and determine:

- Required and optional coursework
- Practicum opportunities
- TA and RA opportunities or requirements
- Whether they have comprehensive exams, qualifying exams, licensure exams, or thesis requirements
- Faculty research interest (you would be wise to read some of their recent publications so you know their topic areas and research methodologies)

Ultimately, faculty will be interested in someone who is easy to get along with, someone who has initiative and is passionate about the research they are conducting, and someone who is creative and excited about intellectual discussions. Remember that anyone you speak to during that day is part of the admissions process—this means that if you have an informal get-together with graduate students, they will be watching for strange behavior, excessive drinking, and those sorts of behavior. They are interested in having good colleagues, and will likely report on your behavior after the interviews are done.

