Tips to Prepare for and Apply to Graduate School

Obtaining Good Letters of Recommendation

How many?
• Graduate schools will usually request 3.
• If you can obtain 4 very good letters, do it.

Who do you ask?
• Professionals who know you best.
• Professionals who will be able to say good things about you.
• Professors are best.
• Employers are good if the work is related to your field.
• Supervisors of volunteer work are good if the work is related to your field.

When do you ask?
• At least 2 weeks before the first graduate school deadline.
• Not more than 6 weeks before the first graduate school deadline.
• Never after the graduate school deadline!
• Plan to spend a few minutes with each recommender to share (with enthusiasm) your career goals.

What do you give the recommender?
• Your name.
• Your major and minor.
• Class(es) you took with the professor, along with the grade(s) received.
• Description of any projects completed for the course(s).
• Cum GPA, Major GPA, GRE scores.
• Description of work/volunteer experience related to your field.
• Description of research experience, including presentations and publications.
• List of organizations (e.g., Alpha Chi, Gamma Beta Phi, SOS, etc.) and leadership positions.
• List of conferences attended.
• Brief description of each graduate program to which you are applying.
• Any forms provided by each graduate school (with the waiver signed).
• A stamped and addressed envelope for each graduate school.

Am I done?
• No.
• One week before the deadline, check with each graduate school to verify that your application is complete.
• If letters of recommendation are missing, check with each recommender to verify that they have sent the letter.