

Preparing for PhD

Applying to Psychology PhD graduate programs is very different than applying to any other graduate program. You really are applying to work under a research professor, not a program. It will require that you've already been interacting and connecting with a faculty doing research at the school you want to attend and learning from them *if* they have a grant available the year that you want to apply.

Why is it competitive? Because most PhD programs at a public university are *fully funded*: they pay *you* to be a graduate student in their program. Because of this only some faculty have grants available in the year you want to apply and the program accepts only about 5 students a year.

Do you have:

- Someone working on their PhD or already has their PhD that can **mentor** you?
- A **great GPA**? 3.5 or higher
- **Extensive research experience**? A research assistant position in a lab or two, for at least one year if not longer
- A **research project** like Honors Undergraduate Thesis (HUT)?
- **Teaching** experience? Being a teaching assistant with a professor helps as the grant you get paid with may require teaching undergraduate classes
- High scores on **GRE** or other necessary standardized test (some schools have been waiving this to encourage diversity)
- Do you even need a doctorate to do what you want to do or you are just looking for the title? Be sure you've done extensive research not only on your career choice, but yourself: evaluate your health, skills, values and interests

You will likely **apply to at least 6-8 programs** (again these are programs you've already been connecting with). Each graduate program may charge an application fee so application alone can be expensive

Should you get your Master's degree first?

- **Pros:** gain more research experience, start on thesis, earn great grades, help guarantee acceptance into a competitive doctorate, may be all you need for career if get licensed with masters, or may decide to change careers
- **Cons:** extends timeline to doctorate, masters may be unpaid, you maybe retaking graduate level courses again as courses may not transfer towards doctorate

For Clinical Doctorate: Should you aim for PsyD instead of PhD?

- **Pros:** faster route to become a psychologist, more applied focus on doing therapy with patients, less competitive acceptance rates
- **Cons:** only few schools in Florida offer PsyD, only at private schools: expensive, may be "looked down upon" by PhD colleagues as they are less research focused, may limit job opportunities
- **It is highly recommended you still gain research experience at the undergraduate level to apply for PsyD programs**