

There are two good reasons for going to **GRADUATE** or **PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL**:

- 1) Because you love a certain subject;
- 2) Because an advanced degree is a necessary means to an end - you need a Ph.D. to teach at a college, or, for example, you'd like to practice law or medicine. However, some people apply to graduate and professional schools for the wrong reasons.

Think twice if your primary reason for applying to graduate or professional school includes any of the following:

"I won't get a job with just a B.A."

On the contrary, about 80 percent of each Smith graduating class goes to work within six months of graduation. Essentially, every Smith graduate who wants to work after graduation will find a job.

"All Smith women go to graduate or professional school."

More than 20 percent of each graduating class goes directly on to some kind of further education or training. However, many women who begin working immediately after graduation do undertake further study or training later.

"I'll earn more with a graduate degree."

That depends on whether you're thinking about short- or long-term income potential. In some fields, people with advanced degrees do earn more, but while they are earning their degrees they may have no income and may be assuming debts. On the other hand, someone who begins work soon after graduation earns wages immediately and may have smaller educational debts if she later decides to continue her studies. If she does decide to go on to graduate school, her direct experience in the field is likely to help her choose her training more carefully and wisely.

"I don't know what else to do."

Unlike undergraduate school, where you can choose courses in many fields and take them in a structured environment, graduate study is focused, self-directed, and specialized. Graduate departments assume that their students will have individually developed academic goals. For anyone lacking that focus, graduate study is a waste of time and money. In addition, some professional schools - including many business schools and some social work and clinical psychology programs - prefer applicants who have already demonstrated a commitment to and an interest in the field by working in it for a year or more after college.

Do Your Homework

You need help deciding when to begin graduate work, now or later, how to choose a school, when to take tests, and how to pay for your schooling. These decisions require a great deal of thought, because the commitments of time, energy, and finances are considerable.