How to Apply to Graduate School in Psychology
Melissa G. Keith
Purdue PhD '19
I/O Faculty at Bowling Green State University

<u>Important Disclaimers</u>: I am an Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychologist and my knowledge of applying to graduate school in other fields is very limited. Students applying to other fields of Psychology (e.g., Clinical, Counseling, Developmental, Social, Experimental, Quantitative) should use this only as a general guide and talk with a faculty member in their desired field to get their perspective.
It is also important to keep in mind that this is *my* perspective and other faculty may have different perspectives. Although much of this advice will be similar across faculty and programs, I would *always* encourage students interested in graduate school to have ongoing discussions with as many faculty members as they can to gain insight into the process.

1) GENERAL TIMELINE FOR APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Freshman - Junior Year:
- Get involved in research - the sooner the better!
- Start thinking about the program in Psychology (or other field) you would like to specialize in.
  - There are many options: I/O, Social, Clinical, Counseling, Cognitive, Quantitative, Developmental, etc.
  - Decide whether you would like to pursue a Master's, PhD, or PsyD (see Table 1)
  - When deciding, think about what classes interest you, what careers interest you, and what type of research interests you (Good reason to get involved in research!)
  - It is ok to do research in areas that you do not plan to attend graduate school in!
- Get to know the faculty and graduate students of the field you plan to pursue a graduate degree in. If you are coming from a school without a program or faculty in that field, connect with the faculty and/or graduate students in similar fields at your institution or reach out to faculty at other institutions.

Table 1
Brief comparison between different types of programs

	Master's	**PhD**	**PsyD** **(for Clinical)**
Length of Program	2-3 years	5+ years	4+ years
Funding	Tuition not covered; usually no stipend	Tuition costs covered; Stipend included	Tuition not covered; usually no stipend
Training Focus	Research and practice; focus on practice.	Research and practice.	Focus on practice.
Career Prospects	Practitioner/Applied/ Professional *Note that not all fields offer Master's (e.g., Clinical)	Academic/Professor OR Practitioner/Applied *Salary typically higher than Master's; more options with a PhD than Master's	

*The guidelines here are based on "typical" programs – there are certainly scholarship-focused Master's programs and practitioner-focused PhD programs, but the majority follow the model described above.

Junior Year:
- Begin researching potential schools
  - Some fields have searchable databases (e.g., IO: https://www.siop.org/Events-Education/Graduate-Training-Program; Clinical: https://www.accreditation.apa.org/accredited-programs; Counseling: https://www.cacrep.org/; Developmental: https://www.apadivisions.org/division-7/students-careers/graduate-programs; Social: https://spsp.org/professional-development/graduate-school/graduate-program-directory)
  - Who are the faculty?
  - What is the program's reputation? (can ask faculty and/or students about this; can also look at various rankings online) *Keep in mind that the school's name recognition does not necessarily correlate with the quality of the program.*
  - Are they doing research you are interested in? (can look at faculty web pages or Google Scholar to find recent research)
  - Are the faculty members publishing?
  - Are the graduate students publishing?
  - What are the outcomes for graduate students? Are they getting good job placements?
  - What are the requirements to be accepted?
- Study for the GRE or at least develop a plan to study for the GRE

Summer before Senior Year:
- Study for the GRE
- Take the GRE (*Note*. Not all programs require the GRE, but most I/O PhD programs currently do)
- Start getting application materials together
  - Decide who will be writing letters of recommendation (usually need 3)
  - Personal Statement
  - Transcripts
  - Curriculum Vitae (CV)/Resume

September of Senior Year:
- Work on your personal statement
- Start filling out applications
- Figure out when applications are due

October of Senior Year:
- Have credible people read over your personal statement and CV
- Finalize your CV/Resume
- Request letters of recommendation
- Retake GRE (if necessary)

November-December of Senior Year:
- Send in GRE scores (if applicable)
- Send in Transcripts
- Check on the progress of your letters of recommendation
- Finish applications

2) HOW TO CHOOSE A GRADUATE SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. Good faculty.
   - Sooo important!
   - Graduate programs are essentially apprenticeships, so the faculty need to be people you can work with and who will help you develop (i.e., learn the skills you need) and be productive (i.e., publish).
   - You should be interested in what the faculty is researching.
   - Think about your level of independence. More than likely you will want someone who has bandwidth to spend time meeting with you on a regular basis.
   - Talk to past and current graduate students about what the faculty is like.
   - *Questions to ask:*
     o Faculty: What is your mentoring style?
     o Faculty: What sort of projects would I be working on?
     o Faculty: What would my role be as a graduate student in your lab or program?
     o Faculty/Graduate Students: Will I have opportunities to publish?
     o Graduate Students: What is Dr. X like to work with?

2. Good fit with your working style, needs, and interests.
   - Fit will be based on your ability to be productive with the faculty at that school. This is highly dependent on the research interests of the faculty, the mentoring style of the faculty, and the mentorship model in that program.
   - Best Athlete vs. Mentorship Model
     o Best Athlete Model: graduate students do not work with a particular advisor and compete for resources and projects.
       ▪ Good if you like competition, are fairly competent (perhaps already have a Master's degree), and prefer independence.
     o Mentorship (or Apprenticeship) Model: graduate students are paired with a faculty member and are mentored primarily by that faculty member.
       ▪ Generally good for everyone (in my opinion)
       ▪ Fit is based on your fit with an individual faculty member.
     o *Note*: These two models are often on a continuum. Some programs are more open (have an advisor, but also are encouraged to work with other faculty as well).
   - Positive/collaborative culture
     o Difficult to ascertain from just looking at a website, so if you have the opportunity to visit that is preferable. If you cannot visit, it is completely fine to email current graduate students to ask questions about the program.
     o Programs differ on their degree of power distance between faculty and graduate students. Some programs are very laid back with students and faculty interacting more like colleagues and other programs are highly formal with graduate students calling the faculty Dr. so-and-so. Both can be very positive but get to know the norms of the program before being overly casual in emails to a faculty member.
   - *Questions to ask:*
     o Faculty/Graduate Students: What is the culture of this program?
     o Graduate Students: Do the graduate students get along?
     o Yourself: Was the atmosphere positive or do the graduate students complain a lot?
     o Faculty/Graduate Students: Do the graduate students have collaborations (work on projects) with each other?

4. Resources available to graduate students.

- *Questions to ask (some best asked after offer is received):*
  - o Faculty/Graduate Students: What types of funding are available?
  - o Faculty: Do graduate students typically get funded for the full 5 years or more?
  - o Graduate Students: Do the graduate students have a place to work (office)?
  - o Faculty: Do graduate students have funding for conferences and external training?
  - o Graduate Students: Do graduate students have access to expensive equipment/software (e.g., computers, statistical software)?
  - o Graduate Students: What is the cost of living like in this area?

5. Favorable job placement.
   - The ultimate goal of going to graduate school is being able to get a job after graduating.
   - Choose your program *and* discipline wisely.
   - Decide what job(s) you would like to have and seek programs/disciplines that will help you get there.
   - *Questions to ask:*
     - o What is the job outlook in general?
     - o Will a postdoc be expected or necessary? What are the benefits of a postdoc?
     - o What jobs do graduate students usually get after graduating?

6. Location.
   - Don't apply based on 'where would be exciting to live for the next couple of years.'
   - You are too busy/poor in graduate school to take full advantage of living in a city.
   - Many of the best graduate programs are in less exciting college towns (e.g., West Lafayette, Bowling Green, Urbana-Champaign, East Lansing, Akron)
   - Should consider the cost of living and possibly safety.
   - *Questions to ask:*
     - o Graduate Students: What is the cost of living/rent in this location?
     - o Graduate Students: Where do the graduate students typically live?

3) HOW DO I APPLY?

Curriculum Vitae (see Appendix A):
- How is it different from a resume?
  - o CV's are typically specific to academic settings; Resumes are typically for jobs
  - o CV's can be lengthy, more detailed; Resumes are meant to be kept short-and-sweet
- What to include:
  - o Name, Contact Information

<div align="center">

Melissa G. Keith
20 N. Grand Blvd.
Saint Louis, MO 63103
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: email@school.edu

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  - o Education (GPA optional)

    B.A.   Saint Louis University - 2013
    Major: Psychology
    Minor: Business Administration
    Overall GPA: 3.8
    Psychology GPA: 3.97

  - o Research Interests (*optional*)
    - ▪ *Ideally there would be some correspondence between your stated research interests and those of the faculty at the graduate program to which you are applying.*
    - ▪ *Can be bulleted:*
      Creativity: Currently working on projects related to mood and creativity. Interested in a range of topics surrounding motivation and creativity including setting goals for creativity and understanding the impact intrinsic motivation and expertise has on the creative process and creative performance.
      Motivation: Interested in applying goal setting to creativity and other domains of study.
      Well-being: Would like to research topics related to employee well-being including how organizations could alleviate burnout - an ever-increasing issue in our fast-paced society.
    - ▪ *Or in paragraph form:*
      I have a few research interests that relate to motivation and creativity. In the future I hope to further my understanding of creativity and perhaps explore the impact expertise has on intrinsic motivation and ultimately creative performance. I am also interested in goal setting and its effect on motivation. In addition, I am interested in how organizations could alleviate burnout, which I feel to be an ever-increasing issue in our fast-paced society.
  - o Research Experience
    - ▪ Fall 2012-present   Research Assistant, Training and Transfer
      - ● Conducted a literature search on training in organizations
      - ● Coded qualitative data
      - ● Helped edit a paper for publication
    - ▪ Fall 2010-Summer 2012   Research Assistant, Mood and Creativity
      - ● Coded qualitative data for a creativity study, assigning ratings for novelty and usefulness
      - ● Conducted experiments in the lab

- ● Learned about the research and publication process
  - o Presentations and Publications (*if any*)
    - ▪ It's ok if you don't have any at this point! Most applicants do not.
    - ▪ Make sure any citations are in APA format.
    - ▪ Examples:
      Keith, M. G., Montag, T., & Rolwes, K. (under review). *Role of specific goals in creative problem solving*. Poster under review to be presented at the 28th annual meeting for Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Houston, TX.
      Keith, M. G., Baeza, M., Bertrand, J. & Montag, T. (2012). *Goal specificity and creativity*. Poster presented at the Saint Louis University Senior Legacy Symposium. Saint Louis, MO. (see Senior Legacy Award)
  - o Applied Experience (*if any*)
    - ▪ *This could be an internship, applied project you worked on for a class, or anything related to the field of Psychology you are applying to. Can also put work experience here, but more relevant is more ideal.*
    - ▪ *Examples*:
      Summer 2012: Intern for X company. Worked with human resources to hire new sales agents.
      Spring 2015: Training Facilitator for the Purdue University Quality of Work Environment Initiative focusing on leadership development. Acted as a role-player during the assessment, made ratings, and worked with management staff at Purdue University to develop leadership skills.
  - o Awards and Honors
  - o Community Service
  - o Extra-curricular
  - o Affiliations (*if any*)
    - ▪ E.g., SIOP, APA, APS
- - Other Information
  - o Don't include past work experience *unless it is relevant to the field*.
  - o If you had leadership experience, try to fit that in somewhere.
  - o Do not include anything from High School.

Personal Statement (see Appendix B):
- - Primary Purposes:
  - o This is different from the personal narrative written when applying to your undergraduate institution in that it isn't about a personal hardship you faced or about something you experienced in high school that shaped you as a person.
  - o Show that you know why you want to get your Masters/PhD at that school.
  - o Highlight your research interests (that hopefully match the faculty at that school) and your relevant experiences in college.
  - o Provide information about who you are.
- - General Advice
  - o Be efficient, be specific, and don't waste words.
  - o Try not to be too cliché.
    - ▪ Examples of cliché openings:
      - ● "One day I just knew I wanted to pursue a degree in Psychology…"
      - ● "I want to go into psychology to help people."
  - o If possible, tell a story about why you want to go into this field.
  - o Make sure your paper flows and is not disconnected (e.g., make sure your opening paragraph makes sense with your other paragraphs).

- o Be informed about the program. Make it clear about how you would fit into the program and how you would contribute.
  - o If you are interested in working with a particular faculty member (or two, or three) be sure to mention them by name! Explain why you would be interested in working with them.
  - o Don't wait till the last second to write your Statement. Start the summer before your senior year if possible.
  - o Proofread your statement carefully AND have multiple people read it (ideally those who have agreed to write you a letter of recommendation).
- - Other Resources:
  - o https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/preparing_an_application/writing_the_personal_statement/index.html

Letters of Recommendation:

Who should I ask?
Typically, graduate programs are looking for *academic* references. Thus, you should be identifying professors who could write you a good letter of recommendation. You can obtain good letters of recommendation by getting involved in research, getting to know your professors, and demonstrating reliability and good work ethic.
If nonacademic references are permitted, I suggest asking someone working in a relevant field. A family friend of high school sports coach is probably not the best option.

When should I ask?
Depending on when the applications are due, asking in September or October should be safe. Your recommender should ideally be given a month's notice to allow time to formulate a decent letter (it is also just common courtesy).
If you are asking far in advance, be sure to remind your recommenders as the deadline approaches. Faculty sometimes get busy and forget, so feel free to send them a gentle reminder if a deadline is approaching and no letter from them has been submitted.

How should I ask?
Many sources suggest asking in person. Email the professor to set up a meeting to discuss graduate school and use that time to ask whether they could write you a *strong* letter of recommendation. Gauge their reaction, and if the answer is no, do not take it personally - be grateful that they answered honestly.
I suggest also using that meeting to discuss your graduate school plans (allows the professor to get a better idea of who are and what your goals are). Be sure to articulate why you want to go to graduate school. You can also ask questions and seek advice about different programs you are thinking about. Don't be afraid to pick their brains a bit!
If this is a professor you have only had in class, be sure to include a little background information (e.g., which class you had with them and when). This will allow them to easily look you up and jog their memory a bit about who you are.
*Note: It is also ok to simply request a letter of recommendation over email if a meeting is not possible.

What materials should I give my requestors?
Appendix C includes an example Letter of Recommendation Request form I require for students asking me for a recommendation. Such information is very helpful for your letter writer to highlight your experiences and strengths.

Can also include if available…
1. A copy of your CV/Resume

2. A copy of your Personal Statement
3. A table of schools and deadlines
4. A good writing sample (*optional*)

*Note: Almost all letters are now submitted online through a submission system or via email. After you submit an application, your recommenders will receive an email to submit a letter.

Should I waive my right to read the letter of recommendation?
Yes, generally it is better if you do. Many professors would feel uncomfortable writing an open letter and graduate schools are more suspicious of open letters. Know that it is very rare for a faculty member to write anything negative about someone!

Should I write a thank you note?
Absolutely! Also be sure to update your recommenders when you accept an offer from a graduate program. Even a quick email thanking them for their time is much appreciated.

GRE:
(Last updated: May 2024)
https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers.html

Frequently asked questions:
1. When should I take the GRE?
   - Ideally, the summer before your senior year. Take the summer to study and take in late July. This will allow you to take it again if need be.
2. How much does the test cost?
   - $220 as of May 2024
   - *Note*: There is a GRE Fee Reduction program. You will also receive free access to some GRE test preparation materials.
3. How long is the test?

Test sections and timing (beginning September 22, 2023)

The overall test time is about 1 hour and 58 minutes. There are five sections.

Measure	Number of Questions	Allotted Time
Analytical Writing (One section)	One "Analyze an Issue" task	30 minutes
Verbal Reasoning (Two sections)	Section 1: 12 questions Section 2: 15 questions	Section 1: 18 minutes Section 2: 23 minutes
Quantitative Reasoning (Two sections)	Section 1: 12 questions Section 2: 15 questions	Section 1: 21 minutes Section 2: 26 minutes

The Analytical Writing section will always be first. The Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections may appear in any order after the Analytical Writing section.

(Source: https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/prepare/test-structure.html)
3. What is considered a "good score"?
   - Usually what graduate programs are interested in is the percentile rather than the raw score. The percentile tells us how you rank compared to other test takers. In general, you will want aim for a score above 50th percentile in both verbal and quantitative reasoning, but this will vary based on the graduate program you are applying to and other aspects of your application (e.g., GPA, research experience, grades in relevant course work).

4. Should I take the Psychology subject test?
   - Your call, but I would not suggest it unless it is required. No need to study for an unnecessary test.
5. What is the best test prep?
   - There are three main options: a) Take a test prep class; b) Use an online test-prep program; c) Self-study using a test prep book.
   - The prep classes are expensive (< $1000), and the study books you can order on Amazon for about $15-35. ETS also has some online options that are free or less expensive. If you are the type of person who can be self motivated, skip the class. The books can prepare you just as well as a class *if* you are willing to be disciplined. I suggest going through the Kaplan, ETS, or Princeton Review test prep books and taking plenty of timed practice tests.
   - Alternatively, you can do the in-between option and study autonomously but with the guidance of an online study program. This will provide you with some structure, but generally be much cheaper than a prep class. Caution: not all the online preps use the actual GRE materials made by ETS! I recommend POWERPREP Online because it uses the ETS materials (https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/powerprep/) and has some versions for free.
6. How often can I take the GRE?
   - Every 21 days and up to 5 times in a year (12-month period)
7. How heavily will my GRE be weighted by graduate schools?
   - The answer to this question depends on the field, school, and program you are applying to. In general, it is a cut-off score (e.g., > 30th percentile; > 50th percentile). Applicants above the desired score will be considered before other students below the desired score.
   - If your GPA is lower than other applicants or you do not have as much research experience, having a high GRE score can be very helpful in demonstrating your potential.
8. Are all schools requiring the GRE? Should I only apply to graduate programs that don't require the GRE?
   - Most of the top graduate programs in IO Psychology understand the value of the GRE for predicting graduate student success. Limiting yourself to only graduate programs that do not require the GRE will be limiting your options.

For other frequently asked questions: https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/faq/

General tips:
- Learning *how* to take the test is at least as important as learning the material potentially on the test. (e.g., https://www.kaptest.com/study/gre/top-8-tips-to-ace-the-gre/)
- Put in the study time!
- Target your weakest/most difficult sections. This is where you will see the biggest gains.
- Taking lots of *timed* practice tests is a must (see Helpful Websites). Try to take the test under comparable conditions (e.g., same time, one sitting).
- Schedule your test at a time you feel you can be most focused (e.g., don't schedule a morning test if you are not usually an early riser).
- Read over the list of restricted items (https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/test_day/) and what to bring the day of.
- Prepare for the temperature in the testing room - dress in layers!
- Don't drink too much caffeine. You will be jittery and/or will have to go to the bathroom a lot.
- The written section comes first. In general, longer essays receive higher scores… Other Tips: https://www.kaptest.com/study/gre/7-tips-for-a-perfect-gre-issue-essay/
- The GRE is an adaptive test. Everyone gets the same first section of the verbal/quantitative and that will determine the difficulty of the second verbal/quantitative section. Be sure to do well on the first sections of the test and do not rush through. How you do at the beginning of the test will determine

your upper threshold score. If you get to the end of the problems and feel it is incredibly hard, don't panic - you probably did very well!
- Manage your time.
- At the end of the test, you will be given the option of reporting or canceling your scores. Do not cancel your scores! You have the option of selecting which score (if you take it more than once) that you report.
- Keep calm, it is just a test. You can always take it again, and what you are doing now (aka getting involved in research) counts for a lot of graduate school brownie points.

Helpful websites:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCetxnoJKtzoT9ye9UVS_VbA
https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/
https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/test_day/
https://www.manhattanprep.com/gre/resources/
https://quizlet.com/subject/gre/
http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/powerprep2

Emailing Faculty:
Some give the advice to email faculty in advance of applying to their program to introduce yourself, ask if they are taking graduate students, ask questions, and possibly set up a meeting to discuss the graduate program. As a faculty member, I find this to be unnecessary and bordering on problematic depending on how it is done. Here are some dos and don'ts to help avoid common pitfalls that I now see regularly as a professor. Please know, however, that these are *my* opinions and may not be shared by all faculty at all graduate programs.

- **Do not…** email faculty asking questions that can easily be located on the program's webpage.
- **Do not…** email faculty asking about your chances of "getting in" to the program. We cannot give you that sort of estimate without reviewing the applications.
- **DO…** email faculty to ask if there is a graduate student they recommend reaching out to for more information about what it is like to be a graduate student in the program. *Note: This may be more appropriate after being accepted into the program unless you are deciding whether or not to apply.
- **DO…** email faculty you may be interested in working with to see if they are planning on accepting graduate students. Faculty and even entire graduate programs may not take new students every year. Sending a short email introducing yourself, stating that you are interested in the program, and asking if the faculty and/or program will be taking graduate students in Fall 20XX is appropriate and may save you an application fee if the answer is no.
- **DO…** email faculty to ask questions about the program *that cannot be found on the program's webpage*. Most faculty are happy to answer questions and share information about the program!

In general, do not feel like you *need* to email faculty at the programs you plan to apply to. We generally do not remember who did and did not email us, so there is no real benefit to doing so unless you have legitimate questions.

4) WHAT IS GRADUATE SCHOOL LIKE?

What to expect when you go to graduate school…
1. Doing well in classes is important for demonstrating competence, but not at the expense of doing well in other areas such as research or degree progress.
   - Graduate school is not about making an A on a test (assuming your graduate program even has tests).
   - Need to obtain the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for your future job. If you cannot apply what you have been learning, the classes are not useful.
   - With that said… demonstrating competence to the faculty is important. Faculty are often more interested in working with students they notice doing well in classes.

2. You <u>will</u> work more than 40 hours per week (at least sometimes)
   - "It will be a marathon with a series of sprints"
   - You will and should work hardest during the first couple of years.
   - Unlike college, there is always something you could be doing.

3. There will be a great deal of autonomy and flexibility that you are not used to.
   - Part of graduate school is developing skills as an independent scholar.
   - Important to keep a regular schedule and set goals as well as limits for yourself.
   - Keep track of projects and prioritize well.
   - Projects do not always have set deadlines, so you should set ambitious deadlines yourself.

4. With more autonomy, faculty often expect graduate students to be proactive.
   - Don't wait to be "told what to do", but also don't be afraid to ask for help.
   - As a new graduate student you will need to seek out information rather than being a passive recipient to information.
   - Reach out to faculty with potential research ideas and ask how you can help faculty push projects forward.
   - Don't be afraid of coming to faculty with "bad ideas" - we all have underdeveloped research ideas. The faculty are there to help you develop these ideas further!

5. By the end of graduate school, you are expected to become an expert in something but also have a breadth of your field of psychology.
   - I want my graduate students to eventually be able to teach me things that I do not know!

What to do when you are in graduate school…
1. Develop a good work ethic early.
   - Matthew Effect - The rich typically get richer in graduate school programs.
   - Publishing takes at least a year, so be conscious of getting manuscripts out early in your graduate school tenure.

2. Be open to feedback from the faculty and your fellow graduate students. Remain in good communication with the faculty and your other graduate students.

3. Try to work with different people (e.g., faculty, graduate students).
   - You will learn different skills and perspectives working with different people.
   - Develop good relationships with others in the program.
   - Act as a mentor to more junior graduate students.

4. When you are working, work. When you are at play, play.
   - This seems obvious, but my graduate students and I struggle with this often.
   - Important to use your time wisely in graduate school, but also maintain a work-life balance.
   - You should take time off to focus on yourself and your relationships to avoid burnout.

- Setting boundaries (e.g., when you will answer emails vs. not) is healthy.

5. Be strategic with the projects you take on.
    - Do not put all your eggs in one basket - will want to have multiple projects in process in hopes that one will develop into a good publication.
    - Do not spread yourself too thin. Be aware of your productivity limits.
    - *Finish* what you start.

6. You can say no to projects (particularly later in graduate school).

7. Prioritize what will ultimately get you a job (e.g., publications for academic focus/internships and research experience for applied focus) and what will ultimately allow you to graduate (e.g., finish that dissertation!).

8. Ideally, do not leave or start a job until you have finished your dissertation.

9. Network with both faculty *and* graduate students. These will be your colleagues and hopefully collaborators.

10. Handle your finances well:
    - Save money throughout the year for summer.
    - Learn how to do your taxes.
    - Save money for unexpected occurrences (e.g., car trouble, computer crashing, friend's weddings).

Note. This is now a somewhat dated CV from when I applied to graduate school. It is just one example of what a CV might look like. Yours can look different and that is ok!

Melissa G. Keith
[Address]
Saint Louis, MO 63103
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
[email]@slu.edu

EDUCATION

Expected May 2013	Saint Louis University
	B.A., Psychology
	Certificate in Business Administration
	Overall GPA: 3.8
	Psychology GPA: 3.97

RESEARCH INTERESTS

I have a few research interests that relate to motivation and creativity. In the future I hope to further my understanding of creativity and perhaps explore the impact expertise has on intrinsic motivation and ultimately creative performance. I am also interested in goal setting and its effect on motivation. In addition, I am interested in how organizations could alleviate burnout, which I feel to be an ever-increasing issue in our fast-paced society.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Fall 2012- Present	Principal Investigator, Expertise and Information Gathering
Fall 2012- Present	Research Assistant, Training and Transfer
Spring 2012- Fall 2012	Principal Investigator, Goal Specificity and Creativity
Summer 2012	Research Assistant, Creativity and the Incubation Period
Spring 2012- Fall 2012	Research Assistant, Efficacy and Job Performance
Spring 2012	Research Assistant, Work-Family Conflict

Fall 2010-Summer 2012   Research Assistant, Mood and Creativity

PRESENTATIONS

Keith, M., Montag, T., & Rolwes, K. (under review). *Role of specific goals in creative problem solving.* Poster under review to be presented at the 28th annual meeting for Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Houston TX.

Rolwes, K. R., Montag, T., **Keith, M. G.,** Fehrmann, J. M. & Brown, M. K. (under review) *Information-rich cues trigger novel insights during incubation.* Poster to be presented at the 28th annual meeting for Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Houston, TX.

Keith, M., Baeza, M., Bertrand, J. & Montag, T. (2012). *Goal specificity and creativity.* Poster presented at the Saint Louis University Senior Legacy Symposium. Saint Louis, MO. (see Senior Legacy Award)

Keith, M., Baeza, M., Bertrand, J. & Montag, T. (2012). *Goal specificity and creativity.* Poster presented at the Saint Louis University Capstone Symposium. Saint Louis, MO.

Ferhmann, J., Montag, T., Baeza, M., Rolwes, K., Brown, M., **Keith, M.,** Stewart, S. D., Myers, Z., Bertrand, J. & Gargula, S. (2012). *Positive affectivity increases time spent gathering information in creativity tasks.* Poster presented at the 24th annual meeting of the Association for Psychological Science. Chicago, IL.

Montag, T., **Keith, M.,** Rolwes, K., Baeza, M. & Kiburz, C. (2011). *Deciding factors in choosing your most creative idea.* Poster presented at the annual meeting for the Society for Judgment and Decision Making. Seattle, WA.

AWARDS AND HONORS

2013   Psi Chi Research Award in recognition of research excellence

2012   Senior Legacy Award in Psychology in recognition of research excellence

2012   Unsung Hero Award in recognition of service to the Greek Community

2012   Activities and Public Relations Chair, Psi Chi National Honor Society

2011   Member, Psi Chi National Honor Society

2011   Member, Order of Omega Greek Honor Society

2010-2012   Secretary, Zeta Tau Alpha – Kappa Omega Chapter

Example Personal Statement

Note that I do not consider this a "great" Personal Statement, but it will give you an idea of what one looks like.

Personal Statement for Melissa Keith:

My interest in psychology began in high school when I came to recognize my fascination with people and how they think. An avid people-watcher, I often wondered why people behaved the way they did. Majoring in Psychology seemed like an obvious choice and everything fell into place as I began my Freshman year at Saint Louis University. In addition to my curiosity for psychology, learning about business seemed like a sensible secondary path. Therefore, I decided to work toward a Certificate in Business Administration in addition to my Psychology major. Split between my interest in Business and my fascination with Psychology, I had an "ah ha" moment, and became interested in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology. I was drawn by the relevance and applicability of I/O Psychology to workplace. I felt I/O Psychology would offer me a pathway to study topics I not only found interesting, but topics that were also relevant to organizations and the people working at those organizations. Still, my decision at this point was more fascination than the true passion, which would develop after I became involved in research.

My parents and professors had always impressed upon me the importance of getting involved in research early, so I began searching for research opportunities at the beginning of my Sophomore year. At the time, I did not realize what a large impact research would have on my life as an undergraduate. I applied to work in a research lab with Tamara Montag, a graduate student who is now an Assistant Professor at Ball State University. There were many opportunities, but the research projects in the area of creativity, shaped much of what I know about psychological research. I worked closely with Dr. Montag who became both an invaluable resource and mentor. It was her example and contagious enthusiasm that solidified my desire to pursue a career in academia.

Not only did I code data and run participants in a lab, I was invited to expand upon current research and pursue my own interests, which is where I decided to combine my interests of goal setting and creativity to examine the effects of goal specificity on creativity. My work regarding the study of goal specificity and creativity started in the Fall of 2011. Since then, I have read many articles on these topics and have endeavored to design a study for the first time. This research experience resulted in two connected studies, two presentations, and is currently under review for the 28th annual meeting for SIOP 2013. Designing and conducting a study was simultaneously challenging and exciting, and I learned much from the experience. I experienced the exhilaration of becoming completely immersed in a topic and attempting to clarify it through research. It was at this point that my fascination with I/O Psychology became a passion, which has led me to apply for graduate study in the field.

I believe I have always had a certain curiosity and intrinsic motivation that I've been told is invaluable to a researcher. I have learned through my involvement in various studies that research is never ending. Each study leads to more questions and more discoveries, which shapes my future research interests. For example, I am currently conducting research looking into a potential moderating effect that domain expertise has on the relationship between information gathering and creativity. From this work I am discovering that there are many ways domain expertise may affect creativity. For instance, I think future research could examine how the level of domain expertise an individual possesses affects how

information is gathered and the type of information that is gathered, ultimately influencing an individual's creativity. I look forward to the opportunity to be a part of that future research.

I am also very interested in the topic of motivation, which is one of my primary reasons for applying to Purdue University to work with Carolyn Jagacinski. Motivation became a topic of interest while I was researching goal setting, and goal setting continues to be a large factor of my interest in the subject. In the future, I would be interested in examining motivation and its implications for creativity and burnout. I hope to further my understanding of creativity and perhaps explore the impact expertise has on intrinsic motivation and ultimately creative performance. In addition, I am interested in how organizations could alleviate burnout, which I feel to be an ever-increasing issue in our fast-paced society. While there is much I would like to accomplish, my main goal at this point is becoming an effective and strong researcher. I am looking for a Graduate school that gives me the opportunity to do research and gain experience in multiple subjects that interest me, particularly motivation. The I/O Psychology PhD program at Purdue University has an excellent record and would be very effective in guiding my passion for research in the field. In return, I will pledge hard work, enthusiasm, and critical thought.

Appendix C
Letter of Recommendation Form

Dear Student,

To help me provide you with a more effective letter of recommendation, please fill out this form and return it to me as soon as possible. Ideally, I would have this form 2-3 weeks prior to the first application deadline. Keep in mind the more information provided, the more detailed my letter can be. The goal is to help me highlight your relevant strengths and accomplishments.

Note: When you apply to graduate schools, you should *waive your right to view your letters* of recommendation not because your recommenders will write bad letters but because schools view the letters as more trustworthy.

_____

Name:

Courses Taken from Me:
Course Name(s):
Fall or Spring/Year:
Final Grade:

Research Involvement with Me:
Fall or Spring/Year:
What was your role in the project?

Use of Letters:
_____ Graduate School (write in program type here – degree and discipline)
_____ Internship/Summer Research (write in discipline here)
_____ Employment
_____ Scholarship
_____ Other (write in use here)

Academic Background
Major(s):
Minor(s):

Optional:
Overall GPA:
Major GPA:
Note: I will only mention GPA in my letters if it highlights a strength of your application. You do not need to provide me with your GPA if you do not wish to.

Research Experience (if applicable, provide a brief description of any research labs you have been a part of while at BGSU and your role in the lab)**:**

Honor's Thesis (if applicable)
  Research Advisor(s):
  Research Title:

Summer Research/Internship Experiences (if applicable, indicate when and where the internship was conducted and a sentence describing the focus of your project/job)

Honors and Awards (if applicable):

Membership in Organizations and Extracurricular Activities (if applicable)**:** (please note leadership positions)

What are your professional goals? Why do you want to attend graduate school (if applicable**)?**

What strengths do you have that you would like me to highlight in your letter?

Is there any other information I should know for writing your letter?