



## **The Five Most Stupid Reasons to go to Grad School**

### **1. You are avoiding personal/family/financial obligations**

Rather than providing a solution to other issues going on in your life, going to grad school will most likely aggravate them. Who needs the extra stress? And expensive stress at that. There are healthier and more affordable ways to resolve difficult personal challenges.

If you are trying to resolve a personal problem, seeking advice from a counselor, a financial advisor, or another professional is far more likely to help you than taking on the additional rigors of grad school.

If you are avoiding the job hunt, realize that when you complete grad school, you will find yourself in the same position again. Employers place a great deal of weight on your experience, not just your education. In fact, most graduate admissions staff prefer to see some work experience on a resume in addition to if not more than advanced education.

### **2. You don't like your current job**

If you don't like your current job, try to make your job more satisfying by addressing the problems directly. If that's not possible, consider finding a new job.

Even in a less than ideal position, working will provide its own learning and growth opportunities and help shape your career interests, potentially changing your graduate education considerations down the road.

Also, working first will help you decide if this field is really a good fit, and if grad school is necessary after all. You may find that your job or career provides enough personal and professional development that you will not feel the need to obtain a graduate degree to advance in the field.

### **3. You don't know what to do with your life**

If this is the case, going to grad school is among the last things you should do. A graduate education can be an invaluable tool to help you accomplish what you want to do with your life, but it will not resolve any confusion or uncertainty about your career or life's purpose.

Figuring out what you want to do with your life can be daunting. You may find that you prefer assistance from a career counselor or coach to help guide you through the process.

### **4. You think that a graduate degree is necessary for your next steps**

Definitely do your research first. Talk to people who are doing what you want to do. Ask them if a degree is necessary or matters for that job or field. If so, ask which degree they



recommend and seek their advice on when you should go to grad school. If not, ask them what the steps are to get to where they are and do what they are doing.

You may not need a graduate degree to transition from a career as a marketing assistant to a development officer, an account executive to a program coordinator, or an engineer to a teacher. Some preliminary "field experience" through volunteering, interning, or getting an entry-level job in the area of interest can also help you gain more insight into what skills and background you would need. It can also help you get a foot in the door and, through a combination of networking and experience, potentially assist you in getting the job you want.

### **5. You have always been curious about X or always wanted to live in X**

If you are curious about a particular subject or field, exploring that interest can take many forms, without having to commit the resources (time, money, etc.) required for grad school. Depending on how you like to learn, here are a few ideas:

- Buy or borrow books to read about your interest
- Join a membership organization that allows you to learn more about a topic through organized events such as discussions, lectures, and trainings
- Volunteer with an organization that focuses on issues related to a particular topic such as the American Red Cross for public health and safety

If after exploring your interest area through one or more of these avenues, you find that you are still left wanting for more, then a graduate degree may be an option for you.

Moving to another location can be one of the most stressful and exciting experiences one can ever experience, and a move should be a consequence of your decision to go to grad school—not the other way around. Unless you are very sure that getting a graduate education is the right choice for you, using grad school as the main reason to move is probably not a wise decision.

Having a larger goal or purpose for a move can help provide stability while you settle into your new environment. If that purpose or goal is not grad school, there are other options such as transferring for work or starting a new job. You can also take some time off and explore an area while on vacation to see if you'd really like to move and live there.

Getting a grad-school simply degree to burnish a resume --- without looking in the mirror, understanding one's own talents and passions, and understanding how more education will enrich a person, beyond adding a few initials to that resume -- is worse than pointless.

I agree with career coach and author Liz Ryan, who writes: "I wish every graduate school admissions process began with the simple question, posed to all candidates of the incoming class:

**"Are you fine right now, without this degree?"**

**Press on, and let your answer to that question guide your next steps and lead you to the life you want.**