

G **GMAT**TM

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B-School Selection Guide



Contents

My Schools and Story	3
What is my background?	3
What story do I want to tell?	5
Where should I apply?	7
Take the GMAT® exam	10
How do I prepare for test day?	11
Conclusion	12
Contributors	12



My Schools and Story

Thinking about your background and the story you want to tell is likely where you will focus most of your early preparation work. Let's take the "who" and "why" you worked on in the ["Early Profile" guide](#) and turn it into your unique MBA story.

What is my background?



To-Dos Covered:

- Assess your background and personality
- Track down your undergraduate transcript

The three components of your application background are your experience (what have you done?), your statistics (what objective metrics can the admissions committee use to evaluate you?), and your personality (who are you?).

- **Your Experience**

The best way to think about what you have done and what has shaped you is to think about important activities and memories from your past. Some questions to think about are:

- **Childhood and High School:**

What memorable stories do you have from your childhood? Who were your major influencers? What were your strengths as a child and how did they have an impact on you then? Were there major changes or transitions that you went through that changed your perspective?

- **College:**

How did you decide where to go to college? What did you major in and why? What classes did you love the most and why? What student activities were you a leader in, and how did that help you grow? Did you learn from non-academic experiences, such as an on-campus job or volunteering?

- **Professional Experience:**

What jobs have you had since graduating from college? Why did you select these jobs? What are some rewarding and challenging professional experiences you have had? How have you been a leader in your professional environment? What have you learned that's made you better?

- **Community Involvement:**

Have you done any volunteer activities since college? Have you been a leader or had a measurable impact in any of those activities? Why did you choose to do these activities?

What is my background?

- **Your Statistics**

The two most important statistics that admissions committees use are your college GPA and your GMAT® score. College transcripts and GMAT score results are the best indicators of academic success in business school. Admissions professionals want to make sure you are fully prepared to handle the academic demands of their program and that is why they ask for these important pieces of information to be included in your application. Even if your GPA is a bit lower than a school's average, the good news is that a strong GMAT score can persuade an admissions committee of your academic aptitude. We will discuss the GMAT exam later in this guide.

- **Your Personality**

No one knows you better than you do, but now is a good time to become even more self-aware. Ask close friends, family members, and colleagues about what they think your strengths and weaknesses are and what would make you a good candidate for business school. It's also a good time to take a few personality or strengths tests, like the MBTI or StrengthsFinder, to get a clearer sense of your personality. Being aware of your weaknesses can help you improve them, and playing up your unique personality strengths in the application can help you stand out!

TRY IT OUT:

Write down what you think are your strengths and weaknesses. Then add to the list as you receive feedback from others.

Strengths

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____

Weaknesses

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____



TIP:

Now is a good time to track down your college transcript to confirm your GPA because you will need this document to fill out applications. Candidates are often surprised to learn that schools are interested in transcripts from every school they attended. Don't wait! Find out what schools need early and get those documents.

What story do I want to tell?

This step is about developing your unique story. This is also when you determine who your audience — the business schools you choose — will be.



To-Dos Covered:

- Develop your ‘MBA story’

Determining the ‘MBA story’ you want to tell through your business school application is the culmination of all the planning you have done thus far. It’s how you tell the admissions committee who you are and why you want to go to business school now. Your story connects your background to your reasons for wanting an MBA or graduate business degree in order to achieve your ultimate career goals.

The ‘MBA story’ you want to weave through the application is:

“I am a (insert key personality trait) leader with a background in (insert something from your background). I want to get an MBA now because it will (provide specific resources) that will help me to (insert reasons) as I strive to achieve my career goal of (insert career goal).”

These three components will form the core of your application:

- Who you are (key personality trait and your background)
- Why you want to get an MBA now (specific resources and reasons)
- What you want to do (career goal)

Even if you never state them as directly as you do in the ‘MBA story’ framework, it helps to have this simple story in mind as you develop your application.

What story do I want to tell?

TRY IT OUT:

My 'MBA story'

I am a _____ leader with a background in _____ .

I want to get an MBA now because it will (provide) _____ that will help me to _____
as I strive to achieve my career goal of _____ .



TIP:

Having a basic 'MBA story' ready will help you throughout the application process. However, it's important to note that many additional aspects of your personality and background will work themselves into your eventual application. After all, a candidate is successful because of the entire portfolio they have created through their life and work.

TRY IT OUT:

Write out the answer to the question below. Then reference it as you work on your application and practice saying it with confidence as you prep for your interviews.

Why do I want an MBA (and which specific elements of the program will help me accomplish my career goals)?

Where should I apply?

To-Dos Covered:

- Visit schools and observe a class
- Develop answers to 'Why this school?'
- Choose and finalize the list of schools where you will apply
- Review online admissions criteria at each school

• **Visit Schools and Answer 'Why This School'**

First, evaluate your options and choose programs that fit your needs. Consider your interests, career goals, and learning style. There are more degree opportunities and choices than ever before, so be sure to explore all of your options. The [School Finder tool](#) on [mba.com](#) can help with that. Once you have narrowed down a few business schools, we recommend visiting as many as you can. These campus visits will give you the best chance to learn about the program and to determine whether you would be a good fit. Contact the admissions office at your school of choice to schedule a visit. While on campus, be sure to attend a class. That's the best way to talk to faculty and students as well as observe what the program is like. These class experiences will help you answer the question 'Why this school?' and you can talk about them in your essays and interviews.

• **Narrow Down The List**

It's important to narrow down the list of schools you will be applying to because each school requires its own separate application and essay(s). You want to ensure that each individual application gets your best effort. If you start early, consider a plan that allows you to apply to the schools in both the first and second rounds of application deadlines.

Another reason to narrow your list of schools early is to allow yourself adequate time to learn about them. Most admissions committees care a great deal about your cultural fit with their program. To convince the schools (and yourself!) that you are a good fit, you need to learn about the school by engaging fully.

• **Review Admissions Material**

Each school usually posts a page in the admissions section of their website. This will give you better insight into who they are looking for in their MBA class. Be sure to find this page for each school. If you can't find it, don't be shy about reaching out to the school to ask! Although your 'MBA story' should be the same for each school, different schools look for distinctive characteristics. For one school you may want to discuss instances where you were a leader, whereas for other schools, you may want to highlight examples of your creativity and intellectual curiosity.



TIP:

Should a school visit not be feasible, don't panic! There are many other ways to learn about a school's offerings and culture. For example, many programs offer interactive webinars, student blogs, program overviews, and opportunities to connect with student ambassadors that can help you determine if you're a good fit from afar.

Where should I apply?

TRY IT OUT:

Which schools will you be applying to?

School	Application Deadline	Average GMAT Score
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____

Why do you want to go to this school?

Be specific and create a list for each school.

Top 5 reasons I want to go to school are:

School 1 _____	School 2 _____
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____
School 3 _____	School 4 _____
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____

Where should I apply?

TRY IT OUT:

Consider these questions when evaluating your schools/programs:

- Would you prefer to study full-time or part-time?
- What are their academic specialties? Is the school strongest in one specialty such as finance or accounting? Make sure this strength matches what you want to focus on at that school.
- What is the school's curriculum (core courses and electives), registration process, and course selection? [Learn more here](#). How much will the school cost you? Do they offer any kind of scholarships?
- Would this b-school be the best environment for you? Inquire about the internship opportunities available, where alumni work, and the student body culture.
- Is the school accredited? Accreditation is an external review of a school's ability to provide the highest quality programs, including the school's mission, faculty qualifications, and curricula. Once earned, accreditation must be maintained and reevaluated at regular intervals in order to ensure the university, program, or school unit continues to provide the best education it can. [Read more here](#).
- What employers recruit from the school? Many applicants have very specific career goals, and may even know which companies they aspire to work for post-MBA. If that's the case, call up that company and ask what they think about the business schools you may be targeting.
- How much will the school cost you? Do they offer any kind of scholarships?

Use [this guide](#) to further evaluate your programs.



TIP:

Get a different perspective about the schools in your list by talking to current students and alumni. [Here are some questions to consider](#).

Take the GMAT® exam?

Your results on the GMAT exam are an important factor considered by business school admissions committees to predict your potential academic performance in their classrooms. The GMAT exam measures the skills that matter the most in the classroom, global workplace, and in our data-driven world. In addition, a good GMAT score can open up possibilities for your b-school aspirations.

Remember: The further in advance you register for the exam, the greater your choice of available dates and times.

TRY IT OUT:

We recommend that you register two to three months prior to your preferred test date, and at least 21 days before your earliest business school application deadline. You may register up to six months prior to your preferred test date. **Click here** to find test centers nearest you. [Register at mba.com/gmatregistration](https://mba.com/gmatregistration).

School	Application Deadline	Preferred Test Date	Nearest Test Center

TRY IT OUT:

Calculate Your Dates:

Application Deadline: _____

Earliest Test Date: _____

(21 days before your earliest b-school application deadline)

Preferred Test Date: _____

(3 months prior to your application deadline)

Recommended Test Date: _____

(6 months prior to your application deadline)

Reserve your appointment date by registering on mba.com.

How do I prepare for test day?

Studying for and doing well on the GMAT exam shows schools that you have what it takes to succeed in the business school classroom. You can do it, but you'll need to prepare by creating a study plan, selecting the right prep method, and knowing what to expect on test day.

To-Dos Covered:

- Study for and take the GMAT exam
- Re-take the GMAT exam (if needed)

• Create a Study Plan

Before you start preparing a plan, download the [GMAT® Handbook](#) to learn everything you need to know about the exam. Then, create a step-by-step study approach with the [GMAT Prep Timeline](#), which includes links to tips, products, and advice for improving your weak areas and enhancing your strengths.

• Prep for the Test

Kick off your preparation with our free [GMAT® Official Starter Kit + Practice Exams 1 & 2](#) and identify the areas you need to focus on most. Many candidates choose to purchase the [Official Guide for GMAT® Review 2018](#) to practice with real, past GMAT exam questions. Visit the [mba.com store](#) for additional study materials based on your needs. Also, explore what preparation method you would like to use – study on your own, enroll in a course, or hire a tutor.

• Plan for Test Day

We suggest taking a [virtual tour](#) of the test center to know what to expect on the day of your exam. It also helps to understand [what to bring](#) and what not to bring to the test center (including [proper identification](#)). Lastly, get a good night's rest. You've planned, you've prepared, now you're ready!

• Re-take the GMAT exam (if needed)

Did you feel rushed? Were you nervous? Did you struggle with certain areas? The good news is, you can always cancel your score immediately after taking the exam or up to 72 hours after taking the test, should you feel that it didn't truly reflect your abilities. Also, most schools will only consider your highest score, so it may be worth it to try again. The decision to re-take the GMAT exam is a personal choice that depends on your unique situation. If you think you can do better by taking the test again, you may register for the exam on [mba.com](#), just as you registered for the first exam. For more information, download the [GMAT® Handbook](#). You can also leverage the [GMAT Enhanced Score Report \(ESR\)](#) to get more information about your performance on the exam, so you can better focus future study, improve your test-taking strategy, and speak more authoritatively about your skills.

Conclusion

Now that you have a GMAT exam date and a list of schools, you are ready to start the application process. Make sure to check out the [Key Pieces of My Application](#) guide to take the next step in your b-school journey.

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