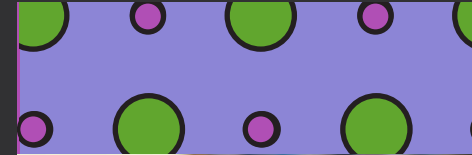
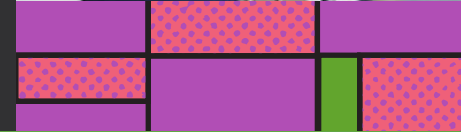
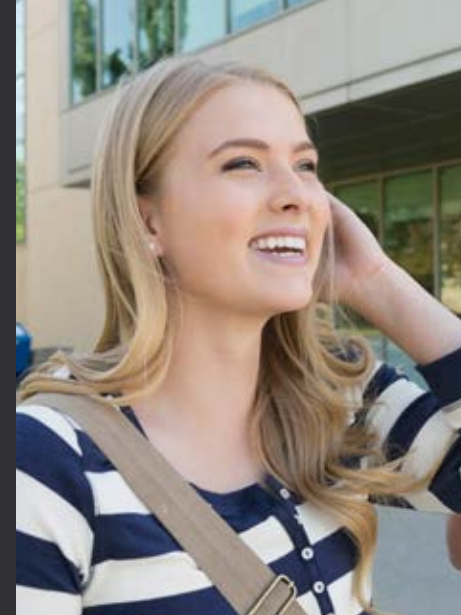
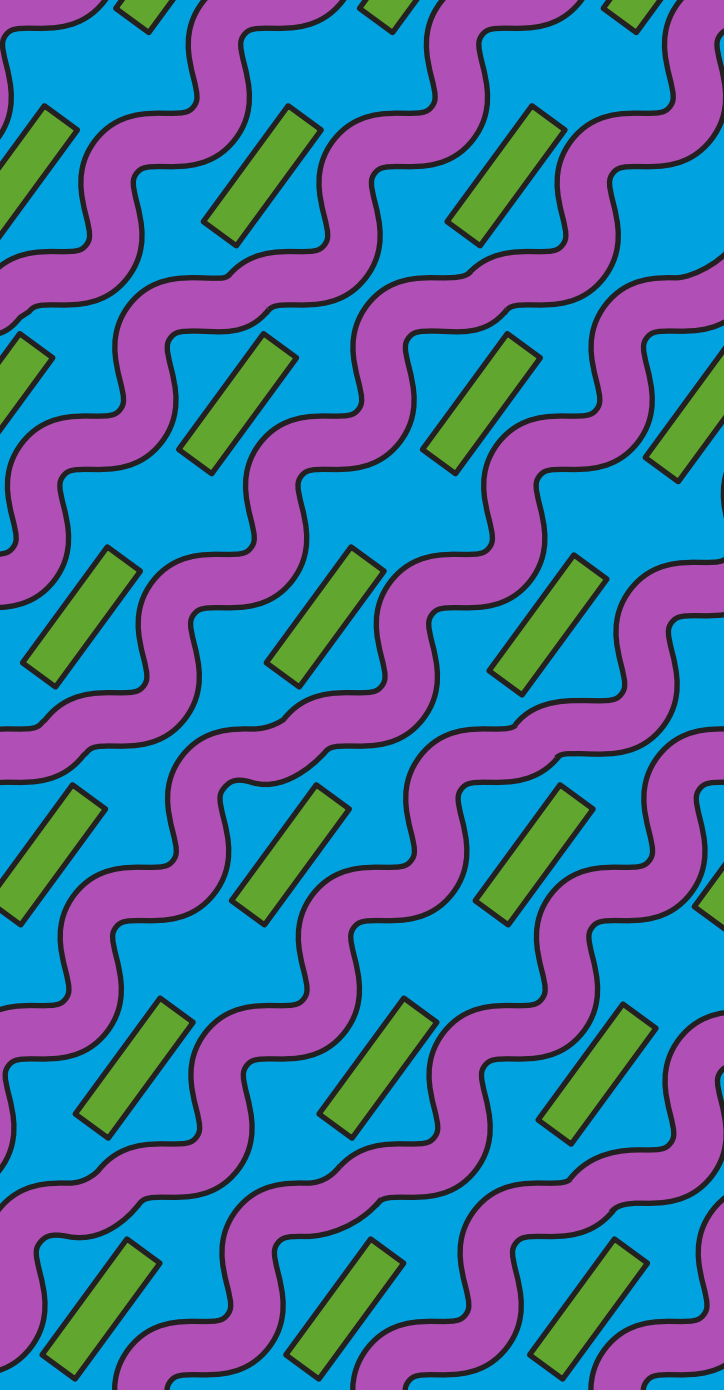


# Personal Branding for Undergrads Applying to Business School





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# Why Business School?

Thinking of going to business school? You're not alone! Every year, thousands of undergrads and early professionals like you make the choice to invest in themselves with a graduate business degree—the proven path to accelerated career development and exciting opportunities across industries, organization types, and continents.

A graduate business degree adds significant value to your life and career in a number of ways.



## More on [mba.com](https://mba.com)

[Why Employers Love Business Master's Graduates](#)

1. Graduate Management Admission Council. (2020). [mba.com Longitudinal Survey](#).
2. Graduate Management Admission Council. (2020). [mba.com Longitudinal Survey](#).
3. Graduate Management Admission Council. (2018). [Alumni Perspective Survey](#).
4. Graduate Management Admission Council (2020). [Corporate Recruiters Survey](#).
5. Graduate Management Admission Council. (2018). [Alumni Perspective Survey](#).



## Return on investment

A graduate business degree pays off many times over in the long run. A recent survey of alumni found that 9 in 10 alumni report a positive ROI, recouping their investment in just a few years following graduation.<sup>1</sup> Most business master's graduates agree their degree prepared them for their chosen career and increased their earnings power.<sup>3</sup>



## Career opportunities

A graduate business degree can expand your skillset, helping you stand out to employers and putting you on the fast track to management positions. Most business master's graduates agree that they've had opportunities for quicker career advancement than their peers without a degree.<sup>2</sup>



## In-demand skills

Current undergraduates and early professionals can choose to pursue a specialized or general management master's program, gaining skills to accelerate their career trajectories. Nine in 10 global corporate recruiters say they're confident in graduate business schools' ability to prepare students to be successful in their organizations.<sup>4</sup>



## Network support

You can't underestimate the importance of relationships to career opportunities and being a part of an extensive business school alumni network can get you in the door at leading organizations. A recent survey found that 9 in 10 alumni say they would recruit an alumnus from their program for a job at their company.<sup>5</sup>



## Global mindset and mobility

Business school courses teach the skills that the next generation executives will need in the globally interconnected and dynamic economy of the future. For many, earning a business master's degree abroad creates opportunities to establish a career and life in a new country.



# Choosing What to Study

Deciding what to study for your business master's degree can be difficult as there are many different degrees out there. As you start the process of getting ready to apply to business school, it's okay if you're not sure yet what you want to study or identified what program type is right for you, but it's important to at least have a sense of what's available and start thinking about it.

Here's some key information and guidance for you to take into account as you begin your journey to business school.

## More on mba.com

[What Are the Different Types of Business Master's Degrees?](#)

[How to Choose Your Business Master's Degree Based on Your Career Goals](#)

[Career Explorer Tool: How to Start Building a Bright Future](#)

## Do you know what you want to do?

If you want to work in a specific function or industry, a good place to start is to contact employers or those in the role to ask them how the degree will help boost your application. Job adverts are useful to identify the skills recruiters are looking for and don't be afraid to speak to potential employers.

## Different types of programs

There are many different types of business master's degrees that will help you gain the skills you need for your chosen field. Consider starting your search with these popular program types:

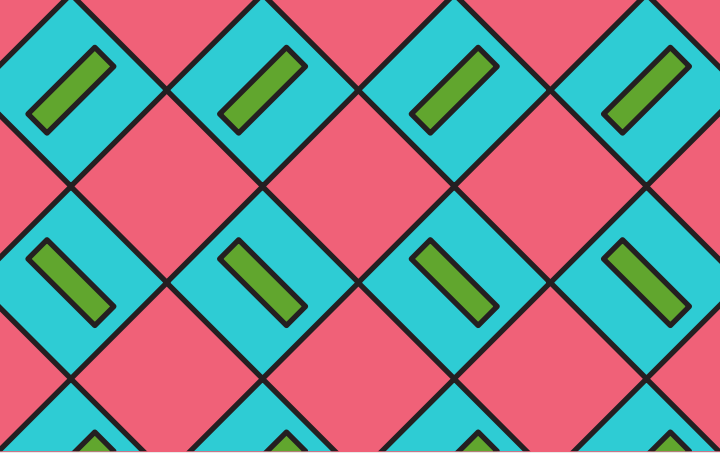
- The **Master in Management (MiM)** complements all undergraduate majors and will help you learn general management principles.
- **Master of Data or Business Analytics** degrees meet the growing need for skilled professionals who can extract insights from data.
- A **Master of Finance** readies you for a career in fields such as finance, insurance, risk, and banking. Check admissions criteria carefully as while most programs are targeted at those early in their career, some require significant work experience.
- **Master in Marketing** programs will not only give you a good grounding in marketing principles, such as branding, strategy, and market research, but will also enable you to refine your degree through electives covering topics such as analytics or digital.

## Choosing between different programs

Degree programs offered by different business schools may all be called the same thing so do a little digging to understand exactly what is covered in the program. First, check out the core program. What is covered? What role does it play in the overall program? Will it give you a grounding in the subjects you need? If you've already studied some of the topics, make sure you won't be repeating content. Next look at electives as these give you an opportunity to tailor your learning experience or broaden your focus beyond the specialization. Be sure your interests are covered.

## → Pro tip

If you have a specific employer or job in mind, ask the school for details on where graduates go. Which employers hire from them and for what roles? This will help make sure you find a good fit, and ensure you'll have an alumni network to leverage in your job search when you complete the program.



# Crafting Your Business School Story

Congratulations on choosing to pursue a graduate business degree! The question is: what's the best way to get started?



**More on mba.com**  
[Business School Grads Better at Finding Professional Happiness](#)



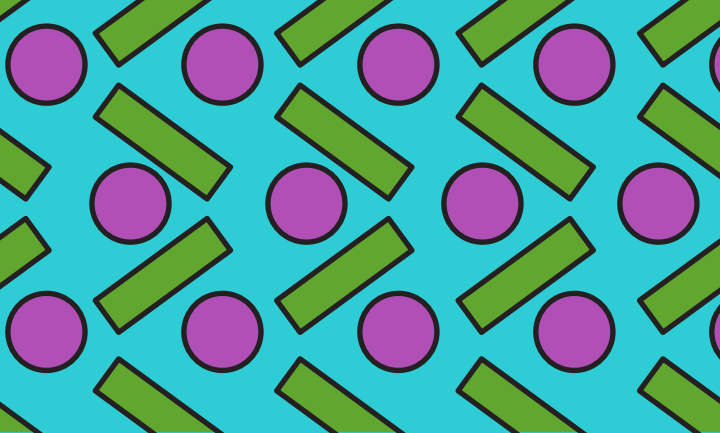
A critical, but often overlooked first step to conquering the business school admissions process is taking the time to think through the story you want to tell with your applications. Giving yourself the space to step back and be introspective about who you are, where you want to take your career, and how a graduate business degree can help you get there can be helpful not only for your applications, but can also help you understand for yourself why you're making this investment at this moment in your life's journey.

Being thoughtful about how you present yourself and frame your personal brand are essential to putting together applications that:

- **Tell an authentic and compelling narrative**
- **Differentiate you from other qualified applicants**
- **Stick in the minds of the admissions committees**

Investing your time at this step early in the process will push you to develop a clear and concise personal brand statement and help you stay on message as you craft the various parts of your applications, including your essays, short answers, and even in selecting who will write your letters of recommendation.

Read on in this guide for advice on expressing who you are, articulating your goals, and conveying why a graduate business degree is the right move for you right now.



# Self-Reflection: Expressing Who You Are

Your business school applications are so much more than the sum of your undergraduate GPA, internships, GMAT™ exam score, and extra-curricula experiences. Successful applicants weave their story into the various parts of their application and articulate why accepting them into the program will add value to the class and enrich their classmates' business school experiences. Conveying who you are, your background, and your accomplishments are key to this.



## More on mba.com

[Overcoming Your Doubts as an International Student](#)

As a first step, take some time to reflect on these questions related to who you are, where you come from, and what you've already accomplished in your life and career. This list is not comprehensive—consider this a jumping off point for your self-exploration.



### Your personality traits

- How would you describe yourself to someone you just met?
- What interpersonal qualities do you believe define your personality?
- What motivates you?
- Do you have any personal stories that reveal a key character trait?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What kind of work brings you satisfaction?



### Your background

- What internship or full-time professional experience do you have to date?
- Where did you grow up? What kind of environment were you raised in?
- Have you had to overcome any personal or professional hardships?
- Where have you traveled, and how has that travel affected you?
- What was/is your undergraduate major? Why did you choose it and what have you learned from it?

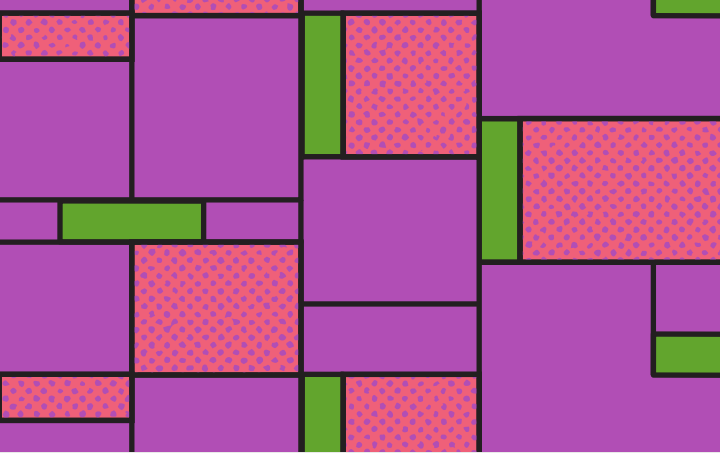


### Your accomplishments

- Have you earned any awards or honors in school, university, or at work?
- Was there ever a time you experienced a failure, and came away from it stronger?
- Have you done volunteer work for a cause that you're passionate about?
- What academic projects have you completed that you're especially proud of?
- What kind of leadership experience do you have?

### → Pro tip


It can also be helpful to involve people close to you. How would a colleague or close friend describe you? What they say may differ from your own self-assessment and reveal something interesting. You may have taken a personality assessment like the Birkman Method or StrengthsFinder in the past. Now's a good time to revisit your results and understand what they say about you.



# Articulating Your Goals

Business school admissions committees want to understand not only who you are and where you come from, but also where you want to go and what you want to do.

First things first: it's okay if you're unsure! The admissions committees understand that your plans may change, but articulating clear career goals highlights that you have done the work of envisioning your ideal professional future and underscores your commitment to the journey of your career.

 **More on mba.com**  
[Tell the Story of You in Your Business School Application](#)



Here are tips for articulating your career goals in a way that is clear, compelling, logical, and achievable.

## Be honest about what you want

Remember, this is your life! Your goals should reflect what you want for yourself, and definitely not your best guess of what the admissions committees want to hear. Narrow things down by what industries interest you, what functions are a good fit, where you want to be geographically, and other parameters that can focus your exploration.

## Research

You'll want to demonstrate that you've done your homework and understand in a realistic sense what it will take to get where you want to go. Research your target industries and roles and get a sense of the trends that may shape their future. Networking and informational interviews with people in the roles you see yourself in will help you find clarity.

## Gap analysis

Identify the new skills you'll need to acquire to get where you want to go, as well as the skills you already have that you can build on. Connecting the dots between where you've been and where you're headed will make for a compelling, logical narrative.

## Short-term goals leading to a long-term vision

Consider not just your end goal—where you want to be in 10+ years—but also the short-term steps that will lead there. This is where you want to be the most specific and should include details around your internship plans and the years after graduation. Make sure that these goals are realistic and that you've thoroughly researched how expanding your skills will help build toward your long-term vision.



# Answering “Why Business School?” and “Why Now?”

It's important that your business school story include a compelling, personal, and specific answer to the questions “why business school?” and “why now?”. In evaluating candidates, business school admissions committees want to understand how their program's experience and resources will contribute to your professional goals and why now is the right time for you to take this step, so it's critical that you be able to spell it out clearly and persuasively.

Here are some tips for framing the importance of a graduate business degree to you achieving your goals:

## Be specific

There are a lot of reasons for someone to pursue a graduate business degree. You could simply rattle off a few of them and be done with it, but that wouldn't reveal anything about its specific value to you and your career goals. Try to be as specific and thoughtful as possible. If you want to develop your skills, which skills, and why? If you want to break into a specific career path, be specific about how you plan to use your internship and coursework to make that happen. You need to make clear that you've given the question of “why business school?” significant thought.

## Relate your timing to your career goals

Timing is everything, and the admissions committee needs to know why you think earning a graduate business degree at this early stage of your career is the right move for you. How will it accelerate your journey to your career goals? Be prepared to provide a specific answer.

### → Pro tip

Once you've identified your best fit programs that you plan to apply to, you'll need to adapt your answer to “why business school?” to address the more specific question of “why this program?”. First consider this in a more general sense from your own personal perspective before tailoring your response to a specific program to ensure that your authenticity shines through.

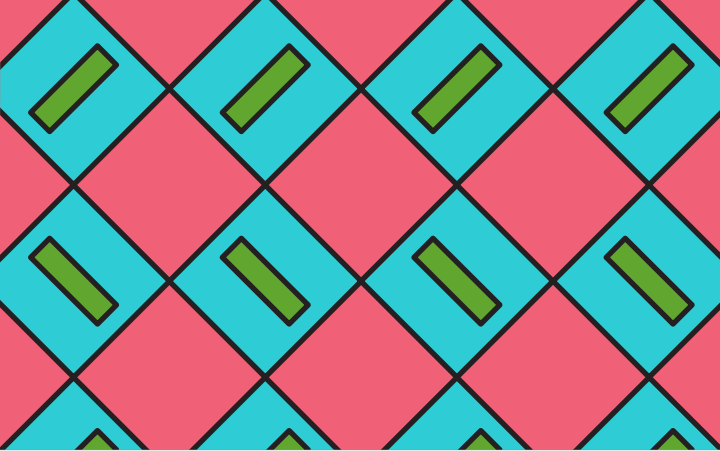
## It's okay to get personal

If personal or family circumstances are driving the timing of your application decision, it's okay to be upfront about that. However, this shouldn't be your only rationale. Work your personal circumstances into your career narrative, and relate the value of a graduate business degree to making your circumstances work for your life. For instance, if you're moving to a new city or country be closer to family or a partner, part of your “why business school?” and “why now” answer could be that you need to establish a new network in a new city so that you can start your career on the right foot.

## What you bring to the table

Business school admissions committees are particularly interested in applicants who they believe will add to their classmates' experience. Your applications and interviews are your chance to make your case for why your perspectives, interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, and more will enhance others' learning and growth.





## Tying It All Together

Now it's time to pull the different elements of your story together into a personal brand statement that will serve as your lodestar throughout the admissions process. This will help ensure that you stay on message and use the different pieces of your applications to communicate a clear and consistent business school story that is uniquely yours and makes you stand out.

There's no one tried and true formula for doing this but consider starting with one of the frameworks below and then adjusting it to make it work for you. Of course, all the details you developed earlier in this guide won't necessarily be reflected here but keep those points in mind for later phases in the application process. You'll be glad you have them later.

I'm a personality trait young professional who majored in undergrad major applying to business school to "why business school?" to help me achieve my long-term goal of career goal.

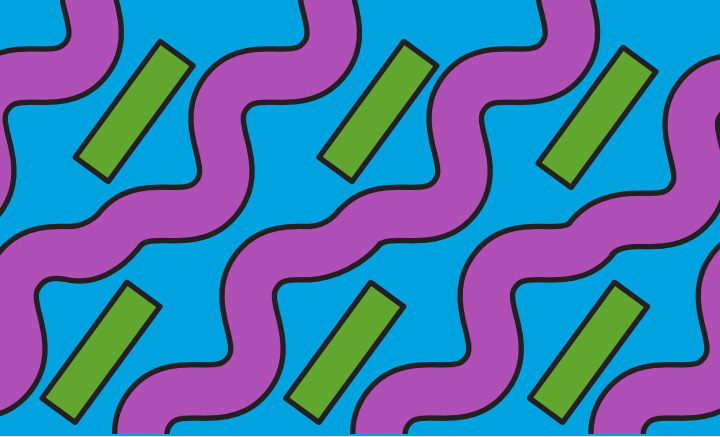
I'm a background bachelor's student who is passionate about background/accomplishment and I plan to "why business school?" with my graduate business degree so I can career goal.

I'm pursuing a graduate business degree now to "why business school?" so I can career goal as a part of my passion for background/accomplishment.

Remember, the most important thing is that you be authentic. If you learn nothing else from this guide, it should be that your secret weapon in the admissions process is **you and what makes you unique**. Being thoughtful about how you tell your story will differentiate you from the pool of other qualified candidates and increase your likelihood of earning a spot in one of your top choice programs.

### → Pro tip

Consider your personal brand statement a kind of "elevator pitch" as you network and meet new people—not only as a part of the admissions process, but also once you start your program and get acquainted with your classmates. Repeat it and rework it until you feel natural and confident saying it conversationally, and you'll get to the point where it's second nature to consistently work the key parts into your introductions.



# You're on your way to business school!

With the tips provided in this guide, you have what you need to begin your journey to business school with your best foot forward. As you begin to identify your best fit programs and pull together the key pieces of your applications, you'll be glad you put the time and thought into these first steps.



## Next steps

mba.com is your go-to source for information and insights as you begin to narrow your choices and identify your best fit programs. Here's a collection of expert advice and resources for you to consult:

- **Quiz: Which Business Master's Degree Should I Do?** Answer just a few simple questions and we'll put you on the right path.
- **How to Choose Your Business Master's Degree Based on Your Career Goals.** Use our infographic to pinpoint your interests and learn which business master's programs are most popular for your specific selections.
- **What to Study: A Business Master's Now or an MBA Later?** Read our expert advice to help determine the right path for you.

