Applying to Caltech Astro

An unofficial guide by grad students

IMPORTANT NOTE:
Although this is just an unofficial guide meant for the benefit of grad students applying to Caltech Astronomy, it is not an official guide by Caltech and should not be used as a substitute for information provided by the school.

Application timeline: what to do and when to do it

Before April 15:
- Make sure you have all your application materials ready.
- Review your statement of purpose and make sure it is well-written and concise.
- Check if you need to take any GRE subject tests.
- After submitting applications:
  - Start working on your research.
  - Write your letters of recommendation.

After April 15:
- Wait to hear back from the university.
- Consider attending the American Astronomical Society meeting in early January.
- Work on applications for fellowships.

Tips for visiting graduate programs:
- Check out the school's website for information about the program.
- Meet with faculty members and ask questions about the program.
- Visit the campus and attend a class.

Examples of nice questions to ask on grad visits:
- What is the climate of the department like?
- What is the average trajectory of students in the program?
- What kind of research do the faculty members do?
- What are some of the most interesting projects that the program has been involved in?
- What are the most important factors that the admissions committee considers when making decisions?

Days before the deadline:
- Finalize your statement of purpose and get it reviewed by someone.
- Make sure all your documents are in order.
- Send your letter writers their information.

If you are from a US institution, you may need to demonstrate English proficiency.

If your first or native language is not English and you don’t have a degree from a US institution, you may need to demonstrate English proficiency.

Don’t think you’ll get a fellowship? Apply anyway, if you can. It never hurts, and it’s really useful when writing other applications.

If you have any extenuating circumstances that might explain your past academic performance, be sure to mention them in your application.

If you are applying to multiple programs, consider including the most important factors for each program.

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