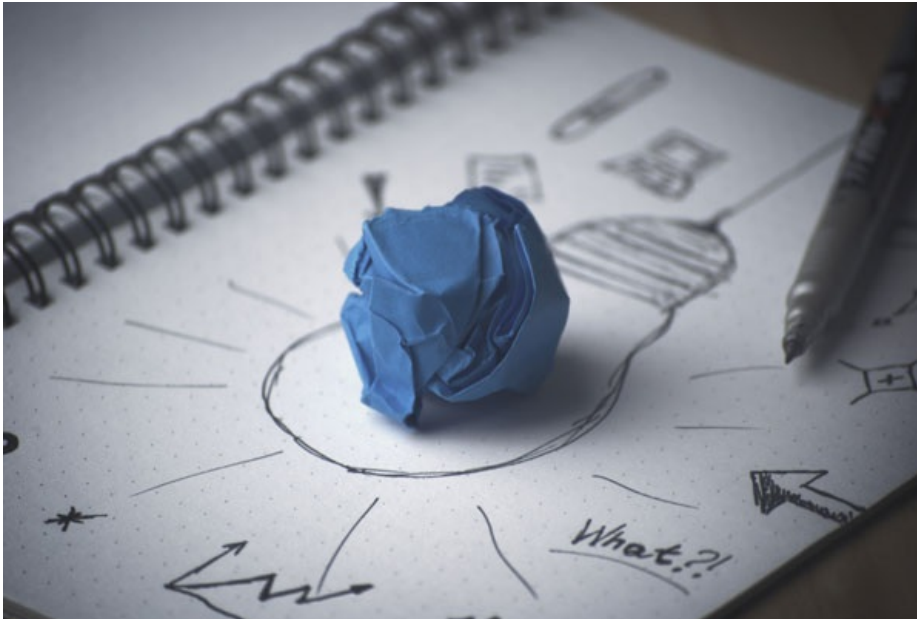


## SHOULD YOU WAIT IT OUT OR GO TO GRAD SCHOOL?

**Summary:** Learn if you should go to graduate school or not while you wait for companies to start hiring again in this article.



**Question:** I just graduated with a mechanical engineering degree from one of the top schools with a good grade-point average and plenty of career-related experience. Many of the companies that usually hire mechanical engineering grads aren't hiring at all. I would prefer to get a job, but I am thinking about going to graduate school instead. Do you think I should go to grad school to keep in touch with my technical skills, or should I wait it out for a while and hope that things pick up?

**Answer:** Either way, you should keep your technical skills current. Grad school may be a fine option but only if you can get your heart into it. Look closely at the curriculum and talk with faculty at the schools you are considering. Will the graduate program ignite your passion and sufficiently enhance your skill set to make you marketable in a sour economy? If not, you can wait it out while you spice up your job search and avoid further debt.

Expand creatively beyond the conventional job-hunting methods of job postings and recruiting opportunities. Strategize how to differentiate yourself. Consider one or more of the following approaches to stay current and develop contacts. Leverage these initiatives in networking and interviewing with potential employers.

- **Contact organizations** and ask to shadow a mechanical engineer for a day or a week (use alumni contacts).
- **Line up another internship.**
- **Write something or tutor/teach** something related to your field.
- **Take another course** (rather than pursuing another degree) that will give you greater breadth or depth in a critical area.
- **Join a committee** of a trade association and attend its professional conference.
- **Accept a temporary/contract assignment.**
- **Create your own assignment** of interviewing mechanical engineering alumni on a hot topic. Capture your findings in a brief report that you give to potential employers.

You are well-credentialed. With a mechanical engineering degree from a top school, a strong G.P.A. and related experience, your skills will be in demand. But you will have to take an extremely proactive approach in this type of market, even as it starts to pick up.

See [Can Graduate School Help You Get Ahead?](#) for more information.