

# Getting ready for speech pathology/audiology programs while you are at Rutgers\*

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## 1 Introduction

Announcement: We now have a summary website providing resources to your graduate school applications for speech pathology schools. A link to that website can be found from my homepage or the lab's homepage.

Rutgers does not have a speech pathology program. In most cases, therefore, you need to go to a graduate program (either MA or PhD). The following discussion is based on kind advices from the former and current lab assistants of the Rutgers Phonetics Lab. All the former assistants have gone to speech pathology graduate schools or got speech pathology related jobs.

DISCLAIMER: following all these advices does not guarantee a position in graduate school, although the success rate from our Phonetics Lab is 100% so far.

## 2 What you can do at Rutgers

- (1) Classes at Rutgers that are helpful
  - a. Phonetics
  - b. Phonology
  - c. Syntax
  - d. Language Acquisition (psychology)
  - e. Psychology of Language (psychology)

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\*This handout is specifically for speech pathology schools. For more general advice, see another handout on mine about graduate admission. The contents presented herein reflect the experience of my former and current lab assistants of the Rutgers Phonetic Lab. I am very grateful to Kelly Garvey, Lara Greenberg, Chris Kish, Sarah Korostoff, Shanna Lichtman, Michelle Marron, and Melanie Pangilinan for sharing their information. What I did is really summarize their experiences, and perhaps they should deserve more credits.

- f. Cognition (psychology)
- g. Infant and child development (psychology)
- h. Interpersonal communication (communication)
- i. Family communication (communication)
- j. Statistics
- k. (Intro biology)

In the last few years, when I teach undergraduate phonetics, I make sure to cover some basis for speech pathology. Transcription is an important skill that many (all?) speech pathology schools require. I now cover transcription extensively in my phonetics class, but having a research opportunity that involves transcription would also help.

### **3 Prerequisites: What you have to do beyond Rutgers offers**

Here's the general guideline about the prerequisites:

In order to get ASHA [American Speech-Language-Hearing-Association] certified, you must complete the courses listed below either during your undergraduate or graduate degree.... The applicant must have demonstrated knowledge of the biological sciences, physical sciences, statistics, and the social/behavioral sciences. The website has better definitions for each category:

<http://www.asha.org/Certification/2014-Certification-Standards-for-SLP/>

- (2) A example list of prerequisites (at one school)
  - a. Phonetics
  - b. Language acquisition
  - c. Intro to audiology
  - d. Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech Mechanism
  - e. Phonological disorders
  - f. Aural rehabilitation
- (3) Another example (at another school)
  - a. Anatomy and Physiology for the SLP (Speech Language Pathologist) (highly recommend taking this over the summer)
  - b. Research Methods
  - c. Technical Writing for the SLP
  - d. Infant and Child Language Development
  - e. Intro to Audiology

Many of these classes can be taken as online courses at Utah State University (e.g. Acoustics, Anatomy, and Physiology of the Ear). Check out <http://comd.usu.edu/>.

Kean University also offers online courses (e.g. Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism; Intro to Communication Disorders). Check out their website at <http://www.kean.edu/cdd/maslp/descri.htm>.

Post-baccalaureate programs may be useful to satisfy speech pathology prerequisites for graduate school. For example, LaSalle University (outside of Philadelphia) offers a post-baccalaureate program.

Yet another way to satisfy the prerequisites is to take advantage of Study Abroad Program. I myself went to a small college in Japan (International Christian University), so I spent one year at University of California, Santa Cruz, which offers one of the best undergraduate linguistics programs. For speech-pathology courses, for example, the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia has an introductory course for speech pathology that is pre-approved for study abroad students.

Here are some schools abroad that offer speech pathology programs. **IMPORTANT:** Make sure to talk to the Study Abroad Program because there is no guarantee that exchange students can take any classes. Also, the list is just an example, and there is no guarantee that this list is exhaustive. Again talk to them.

Finally, if you want to work for a lab (for which, see below), make sure to tell your advisor as early as possible (maybe at the time of interview) that you are interested in studying abroad. They need to plan ahead!

- (4) Some speech pathology programs abroad.
  - a. Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, a BA program in Speech & Hearing Sciences
  - b. University College London in London, England, a BSc in Speech Sciences
  - c. The University of Manchester in Manchester, England, a BSc program in Speech and Language Therapy.

Prerequisites are schools-specific. Some schools let you take the prerequisites at the graduate school while others want you to complete all the prerequisites before you apply.

A student notes “pre-requisites for speech pathology certain classes may NOT always be accepted by a school. Some schools prefer you take the prerequisites with them. Therefore, students should check with the schools they intend on applying to in advance before spending any money on a prerequisite class.”

Another student informs us that “Kean University has now changed their policies on students taking the pre-reqs there. If you have graduated from your undergrad university, you have to apply and be accepted to their ”per-professional speech pathology program”. Basically you have to pay an application fee and fill out an application before you can take the online classes there even though it’s not a graduate program.”

Taking one year off to satisfy prerequisites is also a possibility, although I personally don't recommend it. In case you do so, make sure to inform your recommendation writers, and make a note of what you've done for them, so that they can be reminded what to write after a year of lapse.

## 4 What you can do beyond classes

It is almost crucial, I would say, that you do some extracurricular activities to help you build up your CV/resume. This experience will also allow you to get a good recommendation letter from your advisor. Working at a lab also allows you to make colleagues who aim to pursue similar career.

- (5) Recommended activities.
  - a. Research assistant position.
  - b. Ideally at the phonetics lab, but other psychology labs will probably provide good experiences (see the quote below).
  - c. Presentation at a conference (undergraduate research conferences or real professional conferences)
  - d. Volunteering in the pediatric ward of the hospital.
  - e. Volunteer, shadow, or work for an audiologist.

A message from one of our lab alumni:

As far as extracurriculars go, I was told that a big reason I was hired at XXX was my research experience in your lab at Rutgers [SK: Rutgers Phonetics Lab]. I have no idea if this would be as influential for acceptance into grad school, but I know it was very important for my job. I was also asked about volunteering I did at a rehab hospital in high school. I would definitely recommend that anyone interested in a career in communication disorders observe and volunteer with people who actually have these disorders. It is important to know that you will be good interacting with people who may have trouble talking with you or understanding you.

Another message:

I did really have many extra curricular activities in college because I worked a lot. Strangely enough, my jobs prepped me a lot. I worked for Hurtado Health Center where I learned how to organize files and all of the HIPPA regulations and as an administrator for the National institute of Early Education Research which taught me how to give language assessments. Also working for the chiropractor after graduation helped me learn a lot of anatomy.

Yet another message:

Also, I know volunteering or shadowing for an audiologist is not required for any of the graduate schools I have seen while it is more of a requirement for those going into speech pathology to volunteer or shadow with them. However, it is helpful so you have an idea of what they do.

## 5 Time management

Another piece of advice from one of our alumni:

The only advice I can really give is to learn time management. Research potential grad schools early and send in applications early. Of course grades are important, but I found that school really care about life experiences, and the different perspective students can bring due to those experiences. Take the time to try and observe and gain as much experience as you can if the field before you get into it yourself.

I cannot agree with her more. Remember: many labs do not take senior research assistants. I myself require at least 2-year of commitment. Many students start working as a research assistant in their sophomore year. Start early. Don't wait until your senior year.

Also keep track of your activities (both academic and extracurricular) on your resume from your freshman year.

Another set of advice from a different student:

Important Point #1 - CSDCAS, a centralized application service for many speech pathology and audiology schools, takes a few weeks to process, verify, and send applications. Although the website says that you should be fine if you submit the application on the deadline (which has been true for me so far), it really is less stressful to submit your final application at least 3-4 weeks before the deadline.

Important Point #2 - For the GRE, try to take it as SOON as possible. If you find that you need to retake it, you have to wait 30 days to retake the GRE. (Good for applying to grad handout as well)

Important Point #3 - Make sure you ask for letters of recommendation early! and for the younger underclassmen I highly suggest forming good professor-student relationships as early as possible, whether working in a lab or frequenting office hours.

Again, I find that if a student is interested in applying to Speech Pathology graduate programs, and intends on applying immediately after completing an undergraduate degree, I would say planning is of the essence. There are some things I wish I had planned out better, in retrospect, but overall I would say that the small bit of planning I had done (starting from the end of my freshman year, really) made all the difference. The earlier you decide on speech pathology and begin planning it all out, the better.

## 6 Getting funded

Some of you may be concerned about the tuition. Here's what an alumni of ours says:

In regards to tuition and money issue, students have a greater chance of receiving more financial aid because you are no longer under your parents. I thought that was useful information a lot of students might not know.

Last, if prospective students are looking for ways to get fellowship or assistant-ship usually the graduate schools ask if you are interested in it when you are filling out your application. Otherwise, check around their website and just do some research.

## **7 Getting in touch**

Lastly, we have a facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/213474645350817/>). There you can ask questions to those who have gone to a speech pathology graduate program (well, the contributors of this handout). Professor Christina Luna from Kean University, a speech pathology professional, is there too.

Some of the lab alumni have also agreed to share their email addresses if you'd rather want to email them. Contact me to get their email addresses (or you can talk to them on the facebook group site above too).

The Phonetics lab always seeks for enthusiastic research assistants. For more information, visit our lab website: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/phonetic/index.php>.

## **8 Other resources**

- (6) The American Speech-Hearing-Language Association: <http://www.asha.org>
- (7) The Department of Labor: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos099.htm>
- (8) A list of graduate schools in Northeast: <http://www.gradschools.com/search-programs/speech-pathology>