Graduate School Tips for Science Majors

I. Before Applying:
   a. Update/proofread CV/resume
   b. Obtain up-to-date copy of official transcripts (scan, save as pdf)
   c. Think of where you are willing to live and not willing to live
   d. What kind of PI (principle investigator) would best fit you personally/professionally
   e. Think of what career field you want to eventually work in and the skills you want to acquire
   f. Find out what research techniques are used in your field
   g. Ask for insight from fellow undergrads, as well as from professors and grad students

II. Finding a professor via searching schools/professors:
   a. Pull up schools you would like to attend, or schools with appropriate research programs
   b. Pull up professor directory in relevant department (Biology, Ecology, etc...)
   c. Further investigate professors (personally/professionally) with similar research interests
      i. Check out his or her website
      ii. Published work
      iii. Google searches
      iv. Rate my professor
   d. Make a list of professors along with his or her contact information and application due dates
   e. Contact them via your school email and sell yourself:
      i. Tell them you are interested his or her research
      ii. Briefly describe any relevant/unique coursework and/or lab/fieldwork
      iii. Ask relevant questions about research topic(s) to show you have some understanding of their work as well as to find out more info about their work
      iv. Attach documents that make you stand out (official transcripts, CV, GRE scores, etc...)
      v. Make sure you tell them they can contact you (phone number and email) to talk further about working in their lab
      vi. Make every sentence count to keep it to a paragraph at most (professors are busy)
   f. Update your professor list as they respond
   g. If there is no response after a month, resend your email

III. Finding a professor via prior research:
   a. Find and read peer-reviewed journal articles in your desired field
   b. Determine what specific research projects look interesting (something you could do for a few years as a graduate student)
   c. Find out who is performing this research
   d. Make a list of these professors along with their contact information and application due dates
   e. Find information about them personally (rate my professor, Google searches)
   f. Contact them via your school email and sell yourself:
      i. Tell them you are interested their research
      ii. Briefly describe any relevant/unique coursework and/or lab/fieldwork
iii. Ask relevant questions about research topic(s) to show you have some understanding of their work as well as find out more info about their work.
iv. Attach documents that make you stand out (official transcripts, CV, GRE scores, etc...)
v. Make sure you tell them they can contact you (phone number and email) to talk further about working in their lab
vi. Make every sentence count to keep it to a paragraph at most (professors are busy)
g. Update your professor list as they respond
h. If there is no response after a month, resend your email

IV. After hearing back from professors:
   a. Read up on the specifics of their research/institution
   b. Come up with detailed questions about the program and the research
   c. Before scheduling an interview, describe to yourself what you want in a professor (personally and professionally)
      i. Write down direct/indirect questions to help answer these questions
   d. Set up a time to have a telephone interview (or a video conference)
      i. Speak respectfully, always call them Dr.
      ii. Get a feel for them personally, determine if this is someone with whom you want to work for a few years
      iii. Ask about the institutions application process, what is needed (try and find out the preferred GPA/GRE score, and how important they are to the professor/ institution)
   iv. Don’t sell yourself short—but don’t lie about your abilities/experiences
   v. Always thank them for taking their time to talk to you (you might end up trying to work with their colleague)
   e. Send them an email or a letter after the interview thanking them for talking to you
      i. If really interested in the position afterwards- tell them you are really interested
      ii. Tell them to contact you for any more information or schedule an in-person interview/tour of the lab/institution
   f. Keep the application dates/ people for letters of recommendation in mind
   g. Start the application process when appropriate
      i. Give yourself plenty of time for letters of recommendation/sending materials