1. Be clear on your goals – think about where you want to end up and have a “Plan B”
   a. Get ahead professionally
   b. Remediate a weak first degree
   c. Emigrate
      i. US “F-1” student visa comes with 12 months “OPT” (optional practical training) automatic permission, up to 36 months for “STEM” (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics); note – “Business” is not STEM
      ii. Despite rhetoric, F-1 easy to get: You need to be admitted and show you have the funds to pay for the course, that’s all.

2. Basics:
   a. Instructed or “taught” Masters (usually) 1 year (this is what you want, most likely)
   b. Research or “thesis” Masters = ½ way to PhD
   c. MBA only after 3 to 5 years work experience
   d. Many entrants to MFE has other graduate degrees including PhD

3. It’s expensive:
   a. Tuition $52k USD
   b. Living $24k USD
   c. Transportation $3k USD . . . $79k USD Total for a year
   d. ➔ Have a specific family conversation; is it a loan or a gift?

4. A banquet of choices: 100s of graduate schools; about 500,000 new students /year
   a. Rankings – don’t fixate on “top-10”; many other good schools
      i. US News & World Report (a magazine) is the preferred website
         1. Has rankings for many specialties
   b. Geography
      i. East Coast, West Coast, other (e.g. Texas)
      ii. Urban/suburban/rural
   c. Specialty – specific degree e.g. “Marketing” “International Business” “Accounting”
      i. Watch out for vague programs (“Management”)
      ii. Avoid programs with >50 percent non-US enrollment
      iii. Read their websites and avoid “full-time employed,” “evening,” “part-time,” and online degrees
   d. Most important: Who hires from that school (3 year rolling listings are typical)?
5. Evaluate your chances based on
   a. Quality of your ugrad school X your class ranking; be realistic
   b. TOEFL [or ELTS] score – what you have, what you can stretch to gain
      i. TOEFL is trainable
      ii. Diagnose your weak points and fix
   c. GMAT (tougher) or GRE
      i. Limit the number of times you take, retake
      ii. A “prep” course is a good investment
   d. Schools will publish the 20 – 80 percentile range; again, be realistic

6. Apply broadly – you may feel differently when the offers come in
   a. On the average, about 3 applicants /place overall
   b. Apply to 6 to 8 schools
      i. One or two “reach”
         1. Don’t apply only to “top-10” schools
      ii. Two to four “likely to get in”
      iii. Two good “safety” schools
         1. Don’t apply to places you’d never attend
   c. Application fees are $80 to $200 /school, so budget for this, and TOEFL, GRE, etc

7. You do not need an “agent”
   a. If you’re too lazy to read websites and fill in visa forms, you shouldn’t be applying
      i. Visa forms take time, but have simple questions that you can answer yourself
   b. Agents direct students to obscure, low-level schools that may not match your personal preferences for geography
   c. Admissions essays that are “edited” (or worse, copied) by agents are easily spotted by admissions officers as not authentically from the applicant.

8. Myths:
   a. “How to raise a girl to get into Harvard” – you are not that girl!
   b. Private schools give big scholarships (very unlikely to international students)
   c. Automatic hiring in the US (employment visas are hard to get)
      i. Some firms ignore F-1 completely
      ii. “Specialty worker” is H-1b – even if the firm wants you, about a 50 percent chance of getting the visa
         1. Have a “Plan B” e.g. work in Singapore or HK if not US work permit