

Writing a Personal Statement for Graduate or Professional School

Personal Statements are a component of your application where you can use your voice to make a case on why you would be the best choice. A well-written personal statement may prove to be the deciding factor for admission so ensure you spend time drafting, editing, and asking for revisions on your statement.

Below are suggestions as you begin writing your Personal Statement.

Do:

- Answer all parts of the prompt and stay within the word count.
- Create a sense of your personality.
- Catch the reader with a bold or interesting opening statement.
- This is not a research paper but should showcase your best writing ability.
- Include specific reasons for your interest in this area of study, highlights from your academic achievements (ex. Independent Study), future plans, and details of special and unique experiences (ex. travel or community service).
- Write in an active and engaging style that pulls the reader in.
- Use active voice and action verbs.
- Use the first-person voice (ex. "My goal for becoming a doctor..." or "I learned...").
- Demonstrate who you are and what you have done with specific scenarios and examples.
- Be concrete and specific, emphasize your strengths, and highlight your enthusiasm.
- Allow time to make several drafts. • Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Use Career Planning, the Writing Center, your professors, and others for multiple proofreads.
- Demonstrate your determination, persistence, humble confidence, and enthusiasm.
- Carefully and gently persuade rather than use a hard sell approach.
- Be prepared to write several drafts. Typical personal statements will go through 4-6 drafts before submission (allow at least 1 month to prepare!)

Don't:

- Use flashy words or jargon.
- Use clichés, jargon, or quotes by others unless including a citation.
- Use overly stylized or multiple fonts.
- Over elaborate
- Tell your story from childhood unless it is very interesting and relevant.
- Say "I have always wanted to be a _____, or "I always knew I'd be a _____".
- Use common phrases such as "make a difference", "change the world", "help people".
- Discuss anything you do not know much about.
- Be vague or abstract.
- Use the second- or third-person voice (ex. "When you do this...", or "It was a great experience.").
- Use passive statements.
- Repeat your resume.
- Praise them and come off as insincere.

Meet with a Career Planning staff member to review additional strategies for networking and building your network.

Helpful Prompts for Generating Personal Statement Content

1. What moment or series of moments confirmed that you wanted to be a _____ or attend _____ school/program?
2. What experiences, qualities, accomplishments, or characteristics make for a successful _____? (You may want to write more than paragraph.)
3. Tell one or two stories that show that you have these experiences, qualities, accomplishments, or characteristics.
4. Why are you a good fit for this program/field/career?
5. How can this degree/program/school help you get there?



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