

# Personal statement

Personal Statements are a standard component to applying for graduate and professional programs and allow you to provide an insight to you as a candidate in addition to other application components. Take advantage of this opportunity to share aspects of your personal, educational, and professional experience that has led you to pursue this graduate program. This essay should provide a unique aspect to the admissions committee on how you will succeed in the program and beyond. A good personal statement clearly articulates your personal investment in a field and emphasizes how the program will benefit your career goals.

## Questions to ask before getting started

- What experiences or education has driven you to this program?
- How are you currently pursuing this passion in the field of study?
- Did you face any big challenges while studying this topic?
- What is most appealing?
- How do your goals align with the mission of the program?
- What do you plan to achieve after you have completed the program?

## Tips for success

- Read over program materials and understand what is being required
- Keep your audience in mind
- Show why you are pursuing this specific program
- Consider what gives you the unique ability to succeed
- Follow application instructions (answering all the questions, addressing the prompt, word count, formatting)
- Avoid clichés!
- Use words and phrases that have positive connotations
- Proofread (utilize the writing center for grammar and spelling)
- Take advantage of the writing center to stand out and double check their grammar. Visit them today at [tutoring.asu.edu](http://tutoring.asu.edu).

## Show don't tell

- Showing the admissions committee who you are rather than telling them
- Use stories to show them who you are
- Highlight your personality, motivations and goals that are unique to you and strengthen your chances in getting in

## Example outline

Prior to writing your personal statement, we recommend developing an outline. The outline will help you organize your thoughts and helps to make sure that you are addressing the writing prompt, if given. If no prompt or guiding questions are provided, we have an example outline that can be used. This outline example allows you to demonstrate your experiences and interests through a timeline format starting in the past and concluding with the future.

Introduction	▶ Hook to pull in the reader and demonstrate your passion for the field of student
Past - Background into field	▶ What classes impacted your decision to go into this field? ▶ What professors may have left an impression? ▶ Any research you have been a part of? ▶ What experiences have you taken part in that have solidified those interests?
Present - What are you doing now?	▶ What are you doing now to keep up with the industry? ▶ What extracurricular activities involved with in the field? ▶ Additional related experiences that have influenced you in this direction
Future - What and why?	▶ What are your specific interests in the field? ▶ Why this program and specific university? ▶ How will you succeed in this program? ▶ How will you contribute to the program? ▶ How will this help you succeed after you graduate? ▶ What are your professional goals after the program? ▶ Are there any faculty at the university working on research that you would like to collaborate with?
Conclusion	▶ Summing up points ▶ Full circle - referencing what you started with in your introduction ▶ Follow the format the graduate admissions is asking, size 12 font, Times New Roman, etc.

# Writing your statement of purpose

Putting together your statement of purpose for graduate school can seem daunting, but rest assured, millions have come before you and survived. Below is a quick guide to writing your statement, including the general structure as well as some helpful advice for ensuring your draft showcases the best of you and your experiences.

## In a nutshell

- The statement of purpose is a letter explaining your rationale for applying to a graduate program and why you would be a good candidate.
- Admissions committees want to know why you are interested in their program and how you intend to make use of the degree in the future. While prompts vary, all are looking to learn more about your interests, experiences, and goals.
- A good statement of purpose clearly articulates the relationship between your previous academic and professional experiences, the program you are applying to, and your plans after completion.

## Structure

There are many ways to format your statement of purpose, but in general, you should include the following sections:

### Introduction (1-2 paragraphs):

- Clearly state your goals and interests in applying to the program.
- Include a “hook” – something unique about you or your experience that will grab the attention of the reader.

### Your background and interests (2-4 paragraphs):

- Include undergraduate (and graduate, if applicable) degrees, previous research and relevant work experience.
- Explain how these experiences have informed your current research and scholarly interests.
- This is the lengthiest section of your statement and is meant to showcase your familiarity with (and passion for) the discipline.
- You can organize your experience chronologically or by categories (academics, internships, research).

### Academic and professional goals (2-3 paragraphs):

- Explain why graduate school is the next logical stop and what you hope to accomplish.
- How does this program fit with your future aspirations?

### Closing (1 paragraph)

## Helpful tips

**DON'T** ignore instructions. Admissions committees read hundreds of statements each year, and you want yours to stand out for all of the right reasons. The statement of purpose often also serves as your writing sample, so you want to demonstrate your ability to be succinct and to articulate yourself given the requirements.

**DON'T** write a long cover letter. Your statement of purpose should be professional, but conversational.

**DO** proofread. Then do it again. Utilize the writing center and professionals in your network who can offer an objective eye.

Finally, **DO** be genuine. Before you start writing, it's important to take some time to ask yourself, “Am I passionate about this program?” If the answer is yes, then explain why. Hint: It's not enough to simply say that you took a few classes and found it interesting. If you are passionate about this particular field, the single most important thing you can do in your statement is to let that zeal shine through in your writing. Best of luck!

