



Tips for Writing Personal Statements

What to do

- Provide relevant background experiences and qualifications. Explain what you can contribute to the program for which you are applying.
- Clearly identify your professional goals; for graduate school this means your research interests and projected projects. Show that you have a plan for what you will do as part of the program for which you are applying.
- Clearly explain why this particular school/program is attractive. Whenever possible provide names of faculty members you would like to work with, courses you would like to take, and initiatives with which you would like to be involved.
- Include personal anecdotes only as they relate directly to your professional goals or qualifications. Brief narratives can work well to engage your audience and make your statement memorable, but remember the personal statement is not a place to recount your life history.
- Make sure you answer the question(s) being asked. Some personal statements will ask for a general statement of your interests and plans. Others will ask particular questions about your qualifications, goals, background, or extracurricular interests. Be sure your statement does what the prompt asks.

Overall suggestions

- Be specific. Offer examples and illustrations. People on admissions committees read a large number of applications and you want them to remember your personal statement.
- Avoid clichés. If your rationale for pursuing a particular career is one hundreds of other people could use (e.g., I want to be a doctor so I can help people), your statement is likely to blend in with many others and seem unoriginal.
- Follow page and formatting requirements. Don't write 1200 words if directions limit you to 1000.
- Focus on college-related experiences. Sad as it may be, admissions committees are likely not interested in your high school experiences. Concentrate on what you did in college.
- Get feedback. Show your personal statement to friends, faculty members, and consultants at the Writing Center. They can offer suggestions and audience responses as well as help you to catch any mistakes. You want the personal statement to represent your best writing.

For more information

See Purdue's Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>