

Personal Statement

How to get started



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 career path into a graduate program. This essay should provide a unique aspect to the admissions on how you will succeed in the program and beyond.

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?
- Why do you think you are a good fit?
- What do you plan to achieve after you have completed the program?

Tips of success

- Read over program materials and understand what is being required
- Keep your audience in mind
- Show why you are pursuing this specific program
- 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)

Show, don't tell

When writing your personal statement you want to focus on showing the admissions committee who you are rather than telling them. How to accomplish this you may ask? The key is using stories to show them who you are. This allows you to highlight your personality, motivations and goals that are unique to you and strengthen your chances in getting in.

Example:

Tell: I am proud of my strong communication skills.

Show: Throughout my college career I took on the liaison role for 3 different student organizations to communicate the needs of the organizations to university leadership to attain funding for 5 events for the academic year.

Both examples demonstrate communication skills. However, the “tell” is just a statement without providing the evidence to support that skill, which is demonstrated in the “show.”

Showing instead of telling is the best way to get your personal statement to the next level. It provides the reader insight on who you are as a person and why you deserve that spot in the program.

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?

- 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 interest 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?

- Conclusion
 - ▶ Summing up points
 - ▶ Full circle - referencing what you started with in your introduction