

A Guide: Personal Statements for Graduate School Applications

*A personal statement is just that, a **personal** statement. This essay is where you disclose who you are and what you want. Graduate admissions representatives want to know why you want to enroll, what life experiences impacted your decision, what you have done that qualifies you for the program, and how you plan to use or apply your graduate education. They want to learn about you, the potential you have as a graduate student, and your ability to communicate and write.*

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS LOOK FOR:

- 1) Correct grammar and spelling
- 2) Creative style and content (do not try to be a clown)
- 3) Confidence in self and goals, personal and professional
- 4) Conversational tone interspersed with facts
- 5) Strong introductory paragraph describing your motivation and intent
- 6) Clear idea of what you want and why
- 7) Answer to their question(s) (sometimes given with application)
- 8) Enthusiasm for the program and the field
- 9) How you are different from the other candidates
- 10) Evidence of professional and personal development and growth

TIPS FOR WRITING:

- 1) Brainstorm about your academic and personal life
- 2) Research school and program to learn what type of student they want
- 3) Write a statement geared towards specific school and program
- 4) Make the tone of your letter persuasive
- 5) Let it reflect who you are
- 6) Do not recount resume information, use more personal information
- 7) Do not dwell on crisis or make excuses for poor grades, scores, etc.
- 8) Use life experiences and choices that influenced your decision
- 9) Highlight your strengths
- 10) Get feedback from professionals in the field or someone you trust
- 11) Proofread! And proofread again!

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT:

- 1) Leadership potential
- 2) Unique work or service experiences
- 3) History of overcoming disadvantage
- 4) Demonstrated skills and talents
- 5) Clarify or elaborate on other content of application

FORMAT:

- 1) Follow the guidelines given by each institution. If none exist, you should write approximately 2 double-spaced pages
- 2) Standard essay structure and grammar rules apply
- 3) Appropriate font styles, such as Times New Roman or Arial