

Writing Personal Statements

A personal statement, or "statement of goals", is a major contributor to most graduate and professional school applications. Typically, a personal statement describes your goals, ambitions, passions, and involvements in order for the admissions department to learn more about who you are. This ready reference is designed to teach you more about what a personal statement is and how to prepare one for yourself.

To start off:

Before getting started on the statement, you should consider what you would like to write about. It is a good idea to make a list of all your accomplishments, personal qualities, contributions, and anything else you would like the reader to know about you. Below is a list of questions to ask yourself to help build this list that will feed into your statement.

Academics

- What is your main academic area of interest?
- What makes this your main interest?
- How has your academic interest evolved over time?
- What has been the most challenging part of learning about this topic?
- What skills and experiences have you acquired while pursuing this interest?
- What have been your favorite courses? Favorite professors? Why?

Activities

- What is an extracurricular activity you are involved in? How has this impacted you?
- Were there any challenges that you faced while involved in this activity? What were they?
- What part of this activity/activities has helped shape your personality?
- What else do you do outside of schoolwork? What is an accomplishment you are most proud of?
- What is something non-academic or career related that you are passionate about?

Personality

- What are some of the most important events in your life and how have they affected you?
- Who are some of the most influential people in your life? Why?
- What makes you stand out from other candidates?
- How do you handle tough challenges? What keeps you going?
- What are some risks you have taken? How did they turn out?
- What is something you have done that demonstrated your qualities?
- How would your peers describe you?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- What is a goal of yours that you have always had?
- What is a goal of yours that you have always had?
- Who is a role model for you? Who inspires you to achieve your goals?
- What kind of work do you like? Hands-on? Desk job?
- Do you prefer working in groups or alone?

Structure:

Remember, this statement is still a part of your application, and you want to make sure you are emphasizing the most significant pieces of your life in order to stand out from other candidates. Admission departments will go through hundreds of applications and personal statements, so try to format your statement in a way that attracts the reader's attention. Admission departments are going to be more interested in what you have gained from your experiences and how they affected you, so make sure to expand on the results.

There is no one set way to structure your personal statement, however, make sure that it flows smoothly. Don't jump around from one topic to another, try to highlight a new experience or quality per paragraph in the body of your statement. If you get stumped when talking about your experiences, remember to first describe the situation, then your personal experience or duties, and then finally what you gained or resulted from it. Below are a few do and do not's for your personal statement.

DO:

- Make your essay personal – it should sound like you and reflect who you are.
- Organize it – make sure your themes, format, and experiences are consistent.
- Use regular words – use words that you would use if you were talking out loud.
- Be passionate – it's okay to write with feeling and be overly passionate about your subject.
- Proofread – have multiple people proofread your statement as well.
- Be proud – these are your accomplishments!
- Show who you are – demonstrate your personality, integrity, passion, and ability to inspire.
- Have a positive tone – highlight your positive attributes.
- Be realistic and honest – Be YOU!

DO NOT:

- Speak in generalities – always elaborate on the why, and use evidence to support.
- Ramble on a specific topic – be clear and concise.
- Make excuses or beg for an interview – prove why you deserve it.
- Put others in your profession down to boost yourself – this looks bad on you.
- Use bad grammar or make simple spelling mistakes – it needs to look like you tried.
- Write what you think the admission department wants to hear – be yourself.
- Use overly sentimental statements – you still need to be professional.
- Try to be too funny – you want to be seen as a serious candidate.

Following the tips of this ready reference should give you a great start to building your own personal statement for graduate and professional school applications. Below is a link with more information about personal statements and what to include on them. Good luck!

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/admission-prep-graduate-school-personal-statement>