

Writing a Personal Statement

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What is a personal statement?

- A personal statement supports your application package for graduate school. It's a chance for you to let them get to know you as a person beyond your academics and other parts of your application package. It is also a chance for you to let the graduate admissions connect with you as a person. Depending on the prompt, it also lets you connect the reader to what you want to study, and what skills and experience you possess that show your passion for your chosen field.

Personal statement VS. Statement of Purpose:

- "A personal statement looks back and a statement of purpose looks forward, or, in other words, a personal statement explains who you are, while a statement of purpose describes what you want to do. Both focus on your experience and knowledge, but the first tells the reader about you as a person and the second emphasizes what you want to study and what you plan to do with the degree you hope to earn."

Components of a personal statement?

- **FOCUS:** Students should try to keep the scope of their personal statements within the past few years, as admissions committees are generally most interested in applicants' undergraduate experiences.
- **NARRATIVE:** Applicants should determine which key points about themselves are most important to make and then choose situations or experiences that demonstrate those points. This serves as the main content of the personal statement. It's important that students remember to keep anecdotes relevant to the specific programs to which they are applying and to make it clear how the experiences led them to those programs.
- **BROAD:** Along with why you want to attend a specific program, show that you understand the "big picture" of the profession and the true meaning and impact they will have in their communities.
- **EMOTION:** Don't be afraid to be honest and vulnerable, it helps the reader connect with you. While acknowledging faults or weaknesses shows that you are self-aware, teachable and eager to grow.
- **AUDIENCE:** What would and wouldn't you want to read if you were in their shoes?
- **INDIVIDUALITY:** One of the biggest keys to writing a successful personal statement is in the name itself. This essay is meant to be personal and completely unique to the writer. (Avoid clichés, Yes everyone might want to get into the same program for the same reasons or want to help others, but how can you make your story more unique to you?)
- **EDIT/REVISE:** Get more than one opinion on what you wrote

How to write a personal statement?

1. Make sure you understand what the prompt is asking for and why
 2. Do some more self reflection, brainstorming, and talk to friends and family
 3. Do some research so you can be specific about the program, courses, people you want to work with.
 4. Be honest but relevant
 5. Use specific examples, but be mindful of using them effectively in the space you have.
 6. Draft, edit, ask others to read it and REPEAT
- Tips for writing:
 - Try not to repeat information that is already elsewhere in your application package
 - It can be hard to write about yourself and your achievements. Ask your best friend what they would say about you if asked the same question and take some notes. Try to write about yourself from the perspective of your best friend.
 - Weave together your answer making sure to make connections between your story and the answers to the prompt.
 - They want to hear about YOU. This is the place to let you shine and let the readers get to know you on a personal level.
 - There are no rights or wrongs

Brainstorming Activity:

- Your Stories from Everyday Life
 - As you continue exploring topics, think about if there's one or two stories that you tell everyone about yourself. Write it down. Then take a look. What have you highlighted? What did you leave out? Is this an accurate portrayal of yourself? This exercise can help you narrow down what matters to you — what you see as a core component of yourself. You can use this exercise to determine which parts of you are significant enough for the personal statement.

Sources:

- <https://ingeniusprep.com/blog/personal-statement-brainstorming/>
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