



THE WRITING CENTER

JUDITH G. GARDNER CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

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Personal Statements

When you're writing a personal statement, what sort of information should you include?

1. Keep in mind the **audience** that will read the statement: Admission committees who will be reading hundreds of personal statements.
 - So one major goal should be to **make yourself seem as human as possible**. If you make your reader see you as a person and not just another application, they'll be more likely to accept you.
2. Keep in mind what the **purpose** of the statement is: To prove that you belong in the program you're applying for.
 - So your other major goal should be to **highlight your qualifications** for the program. Make sure your reader can see that you're capable, you have what it takes, you're a good fit for the position you're applying for.

Make Yourself Seem Human

- In your opening paragraph, use a strong **hook** to engage your reader. Consider the questions:
 - What got you started in this field?
 - Why are you interested in the field/this position?
 - What is your personal story with this field?
 - What makes you unique?
- In the conclusion of your personal statement, you can call back to your hook to remind your reader of your individual story.
- Don't be afraid to use anecdotes and write it like a narrative. Talk about your life and experiences. Definitely talk about your emotions. **Be yourself!**

Highlight Your Qualifications

- After telling your personal story, give your reader some details about what **knowledge and experience** you have in the field. Consider the following points:
 - What experiences have you had in the field? Internships? Jobs?
 - If you have lots of experience, choose one or two that are the strongest proof of your qualifications in the field and focus on those.

- Are there any professors or other important people in the field that you've worked with that you can mention?
- Have you taken any specific, high-level classes that are relevant to the field?
- Feel free to talk about other attributes that make you a strong applicant. What useful skills do you have? Are you especially diligent? Are you a perfectionist? Are you great with time management? Are you a strong leader?
- What goals do you have in the field? How will you contribute to the program you're applying for?
- When giving the details of your qualifications, try to **illustrate instead of listing**. Give **specific examples** that show your skills, to give strong proof of what you claim.
- Be sure to highlight what makes you **the best possible candidate** for the position you're applying for!

Additional Notes

- If there's something on your résumé or transcripts that you want to explain, a personal statement is the place to do it.
 - Did you get sick one semester and your grades took a hit? Explain how you persevered through it and what you learned.
- Try to stay away from clichés. If you find yourself writing a sentence that you think might show up on every personal statement in the stack, **change it!**
 - Try being **more personal or emotional**. Nobody else has had your experiences. Nobody feels the same way you do. Use your own experiences to strengthen your statement. Show that you're unique.
 - Try being **more specific**. The more detail you can give, the less likely it is that your personal statement will look like anybody else's.
- Note: a Personal Statement is not exactly the same thing as a Statement of Purpose.
 - Personal statements can be more emotional and individualized.
 - Statements of purpose focus more on your qualifications and relevant experience, including research, as well as your goals in the field.

Remember – you're trying to make yourself seem **human and unique**, and to prove that you're **qualified for the position**.

A personal statement may seem daunting, but just keep writing – you can do it!