



# Personal Statements

## A-State Online Writing Center

### What is a Personal Statement?

A personal statement sells your experiences as an individual, academic, and/or professional within a persuasive essay. Your goal as an applicant is to connect with your readers and stand out as an individual with unique skills and contributions. The best means to accomplish this is to frame your experiences within a certain narrative. However, you may be asked specific questions rather than an open-ended "Tell us about yourself" query, so be sure to read the program's application instructions thoroughly.

### How Does This Differ from a Statement of Purpose?

#### **Personal Statement**

Personal statements are typically less formal and delve into your personal motivations more so than SOPs. Frame your experiences and interests within a story rather than declarative statements. You will connect with readers on a deeper level and stand out as an individual applicant with your own obstacles and triumphs. With that being said, you still need to ensure you don't get lost within the creative details and keep to your main points.

#### **Statement of Purpose**

Generally, a statement of purpose is more formal and focuses on academic and professional experiences to exhibit how a candidate will thrive during and beyond a graduate program; this requires more research regarding the program and less about your personality, triumphs, and obstacles.

### Brainstorming

When crafting your essay, we suggest asking yourself these personal questions:

1. Why are you applying to this specific school's graduate program?
2. Which aspects of the program stand out to you?
  - Are you interested in the program's latest research and/or publications?
  - Are you interested in taking certain courses offered?
  - How does the school rank in your area of study?
  - Do you want to work with certain faculty members?
  - Does this program provide excellent opportunities and connections?
3. How do your personal, academic, and professional experiences prepare you for this program?

4. What aspects do you consider unique about yourself, your skillset, and your experiences? Consider both hard and soft skills you possess.
5. Do you have a hook or angle to frame your experiences and/or reasons for applying?
6. How does this degree prepare you for your career interests?
7. Can you explain gaps or setbacks in a forward-thinking manner?

## Tips for Writing Personal Statements

1. Make sure you abide by the word/character limit as well as formatting specifications to meet essay requirements. You don't want the admissions committee to dismiss you for simple errors.
2. Use active over passive voice.
3. Show rather than tell. Don't say "I am detail-oriented"; show how you have used that skill.
4. Do not use incendiary, inappropriate language or write as if you are speaking to friends. However, you do want to get your personality across in a positive manner.
5. Write positive statements that do not denigrate your past experiences and show your optimism for future pursuits.
6. Avoid vague, grand statements like "I want to give back to local communities after I graduate." But what does that look like? Be as specific as possible to show that you have done your research. Learn as much as you can about the program you are applying for, and detail distinct aspects about the program you are passionate about and connect to based on your experiences. In other words, show how you will give back and how this program will take you there.
7. Quantify your experiences to show you garner results. Rather than explaining, for example, that you lead a team, explain how many people you led, for which team, and what that team accomplished.
8. Although you may be writing multiple essays for various schools' graduate programs (and you should), remember to customize your essay to fit that specific school's mission and culture.
9. Use a trusted source to proofread your essay before you submit.

## General Outline

### **Part 1**

Frame your interests and personality within a relevant condensed story that connects with readers. Show how you became interested in this area of study and keep that narrative consistent throughout your essay.

### **Part II**

Summarize your academic and professional experiences to show how prepared you are to enter this program and contribute as a scholar.

### **Part III**

Discuss your current academic, professional, and relevant personal pursuits that align with your interest in this program.

#### **Part IV**

Provide more details on your academic and career interests and/or pursuits. What specifically do you want to study and do as a student? How will this program help you accomplish your goals?

#### **Sources & More Resources**

- [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job\\_search\\_writing/preparing\\_an\\_application/writing\\_the\\_personal\\_statement/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/preparing_an_application/writing_the_personal_statement/index.html)
- <https://www.essayedge.com/blog/statement-of-purpose-vs-personal-statement/>
- <https://www.prepscholar.com/gre/blog/statement-of-purpose-vs-personal-statement/>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills>