

# PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHEET

A **personal statement** is essentially your opportunity to introduce yourself to a university's graduate or professional schools' admissions committee. It should demonstrate your personality and intellect while briefly describing your academic background and interest in pursuing an advanced degree. This also serves as a sample of your writing skills.

## Things to Consider Before Writing:

### ***Know Your Audience:***

Before you start writing your statement, envision a committee of individuals that have just received a few hundred letters from applicants hoping to be a part of their program. Due to the volume of letters that are submitted for graduate admission, setting yourself apart from other applicants is absolutely imperative.

Your letter should allow them to see that you are an exceptional fit for their program by virtue of your relevant undergraduate body of work (i.e. undergraduate research, internships, GPA). It also needs to persuade them that you are an individual with unique contributions that will work to advance their academic community.

Giving them a clear picture of who you are and what you have to offer, and which aligns with their program, is central to writing a successful personal statement.

### ***Know Yourself:***

In order to undertake the task of writing an effective personal statement, it is necessary to know who you are and to underscore the qualities that make you a distinct candidate to that specific program.

Think of your academic and personal trajectory:

- Why are you interested in attending graduate school? More specifically, why are you applying to that particular program?
- Where do you see yourself upon completion of your graduate studies, and what is your ultimate career goal?
- What is distinct about *you* that will make you a successful graduate student and future professional in your field?
- What have you experienced through that demonstrates your grit, passion or determination to succeed?

Consider these questions since they will allow you to analyze yourself in a manner that will facilitate your writing process.



### ***Final Tips:***

Proofread! Have your letter reviewed by multiple eyes, and be open-minded about the advice and feedback you receive. Remember that committees receive many letters, and so being concise and direct is advisable.

Research the program you are applying to carefully and identify faculty members that share your academic interests. Address any prompts and style guide requirements. Lastly, remember that genuine enthusiasm goes a long way towards increasing your odds for admission.

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The questions below are designed to help you brainstorm and outline some basic ideas that will serve as the foundation for a well-structured personal statement. Providing detailed answers to these questions, and using personal examples, will help you pinpoint the most interesting aspects of yourself to include in your statement.

Question	Response	Specific Example
What unique characteristic, accomplishment, or experience sets you apart from other candidates?		
If a graduate committee were to take away only one thing from reading your statement, what would you want it to be?		
When and how did you first become interested in your field of study?		
What specific interests do you have within your field of study that align with the program for which you are applying?		
Have you had to overcome any unusual hardships or obstacles in your life that impacted your interest in the field you are pursuing? If so, how did your tenacity contribute to you reaching this stage?		
Are there any discrepancies in your academic record that require some sort of explanation that should be addressed in your statement?		
Why is this program your first choice?		
What are your strengths (i.e. analytical skills, written and/or verbal communication skills)?		
What experiences can show your determination to complete this graduate program? (i.e. previous work experience, academic or professional competitions)		