

The Graduate / Professional School Application Process Demystified



PERSONAL STATEMENTS

The Basics



- **Suggested Outline**
 - Paragraph 1 – Motivation for Graduate / Professional Program
 - ✦ Consider an attention grabber / thought provoking first sentence
 - ✦ Be creative
 - ✦ Why do you want to pursue this discipline?
 - ✦ Give a clear sense of your current interests and your goals for developing them
 - ✦ Career goals can be mentioned here – this is the reason for apply in the end
 - Paragraph 2 – Academic Interests and Personal Achievements
 - ✦ This is evidence to support your claim in your opening paragraph
 - ✦ What are your pertinent academic accomplishments / skills?
 - ✦ What have you done that is relevant to this program choice?
 - ✦ Research experiences, class projects, internships, externships, etc.?
 - ✦ Have your achievements solidified your interests?
 - ✦ **How have you gone above and beyond to gain knowledge in this subject?**

The Basics



- **Suggested Outline Continued**
 - Paragraph 3 – Important Background Experience
 - ✦ What experiences have contributed to your personality
 - ✦ Highlight experiences that have taught you something (e.g. communication skills, team leader / player, problem solving, responsibility)
 - ✦ Ideally you should demonstrate how the experience translates to your likelihood of being a successful graduate / professional student
 - Paragraph 4 – Why Should You Be Accepted
 - ✦ Why would you make an ideal graduate / professional student in XYZ Program?
 - ✦ Why is XYZ Program the ideal program for you?
 - ✦ Briefly explain any inconsistencies in your transcript, test scores, path

The Basics



- **Suggested Outline Continued**

- Paragraph 5 – Closing Statement

- ✦ Briefly restate why you want to pursue this path in this program
- ✦ Restate key points (e.g. relevant experiences, accomplishments)
- ✦ End on a positive note

- **IMPORTANT TIP**

- Use Transitions and Resolutions!

- ✦ Transitions – start a paragraph with a statement that presents the theme of the paragraph AND connects it to the previous paragraph
- ✦ Resolutions – end a paragraph that allows you to transition to the next paragraph

THEY WON'T DO THIS!
YOU MUST TELL THEM!



**LOOK INSIDE MY SOUL
AND SEE
HOW BAD I WANT IT**

Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **DO**

- Research the program, school, university
- Follow the Program Guidelines for the Personal Statement
- Self Reflect and Start Writing!
 - ✦ Why are you choosing this path?
 - ✦ What have you done to prepare for graduate school?
 - ✦ Why are you applying to THIS program?
 - ✦ Why are you a good FIT for THIS program?



Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- Paint a picture by telling your story
- Be confident and show your passion
- Demonstrate your knowledge in the field
 - ✦ Include details of research projects, shadowing experiences, etc.
- Explain inconsistencies in your academics / path
 - ✦ Or include as an addendum (ask the admissions office what they prefer)
 - ✦ Ask your letter writers to address your inconsistencies if appropriate
- Explain your career goals and path
- **Read, revise, repeat**
 - ✦ Send to your letter writers!
 - ✦ And utilize your university Writing Center!
 - ✦ Edit over and over again!





**The Do's And Dont's of
Writing an
Effective Personal Statement**

Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **Don't**

- Write a narrative of your resume – Tell them something new
- Use the same statement for multiple applications
- Dear Diary... TMI!
- Use clichés or overuse your thesaurus
- Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
- Speak of money... unless..
- Plead and beg
- Complain – stay confident, accept responsibility for speed bumps along the way, and be positive



Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **The Caveats!**
 - Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
 - ✦ The topic of religion or politics is relevant to the program you are applying to.
 - ✦ State facts, not opinion
 - Speak of money... unless..
 - ✦ You are applying to an MBA or MPA program / Finance program, or similar program where the topic is relevant.
 - ✦ State facts, not opinion



Resources



- <http://personalstatement.blogspot.com/2005/09/outline-for-personal-statement.html>
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/2/>

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Any Questions?

