

Writing the Personal Statement

1. Follow any directions outlined by the graduate or professional school and answer any required questions.
2. There is no *one* way to write a personal statement. The statement should be based upon self-reflection and deep insights into who you are. It also needs to be scholarly; that is, you should apply your critical thinking and analytical skills to your experience.
3. The personal statement is often your interview for the admissions committee. What do you want them to know about you that they don't already know from your GPA, résumé, exam scores, or letters of recommendation?
4. Think: THEME. What is the overriding goal, statement, idea, message, or thought that you are trying to get across to the committee? This is the heart of the personal statement and often the most challenging part to figure out.
5. Have a strong introduction that lays out what you will attempt to tell the reader.
6. Connect your theme to the career path you are seeking. You should be able to clearly articulate your decision for choosing the vocation you are seeking.
7. Finish Strong! Too many good personal statements go bad with little or no concluding paragraph. "And that is why I want to go to (insert school name here)" does not qualify as a good conclusion. This is the last thing they will read about you in this personal statement; make sure it is memorable. Does it connect to your introductory paragraph?
8. Have you explained why you would like to attend a particular program? The graduate and professional schools want to know that you have explored their program and are interested in attending for specific reasons.
9. Edit your statement very carefully. Print it out and "read it backwards" to catch typos.
10. The more eyes reading your statement, the better. Have your best friend review it for authenticity, a writing tutor for structure, a professor for content, and a career counselor for the theme. You may hear conflicting opinions and you will have to make decisions as to what works best for you and your statement.
11. Do not rush the personal statement. This is a process, not a paper. It will take multiple drafts and revisions to get it right. Frustration is normal. You want to be proud of your statement when you are finished.