

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.
 - Did you get sick one semester and your grades took a hit? Explain how you persevered through it and what you learned.
- 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!