

Writing Personal Statements

Personal Statements give admissions or hiring committees an in-depth view of who you are as an individual. It is your chance to set yourself apart. This is your opportunity to show off your best self and weave together your experiences to show how you are unique.

Sometimes you will be asked to write a personal statement. Sometimes you will be given a prompt, or question to answer. Unsure of where to begin? This sheet may help. Your process may end up being very different, but this is a good place to start.

Before you write

Why do I want this opportunity?

What is unique about me and my perspective?

What details of my life illustrate my uniqueness?

What non-academic experiences have contributed to my choice of school/career?

What specific academic experiences and accomplishments have prepared me for this?



What are the intellectual influences in my life?

What do I expect to get from this opportunity?

What strengths can I leverage to offset/explain weaknesses?

How does this meet or further my specific career goals?

Think about these questions in relation to your personal statement or the prompt (if given).

The writing process

1. Analyze the question. Do not repurpose an old essay.

2. Research the opportunity. You want to tailor your response to that particular application.

3. Decide how these questions fit this essay.

4. Write your essay. Start by doing these things:

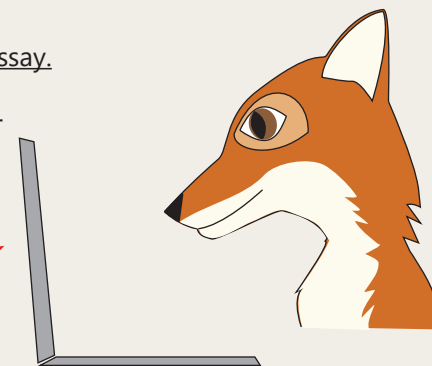
- Answer the question.
- Focus on one main idea or thesis.
- State the reasons for your interest.
- Provide specific information and examples.
- Articulate your goals.
- Leave out irrelevant information.
- Maintain a consistent tone.
- Eliminate unnecessary theses and details.

5. Revise your essay. Double check the points above.

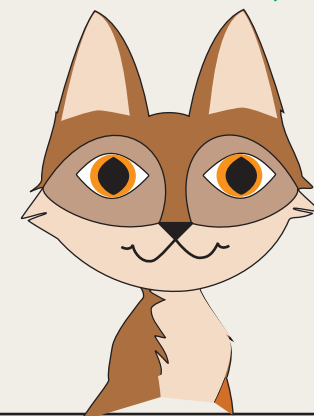
6. Ask one or more people for feedback on your essay.

7. Revise and proofread.

8. Repeat steps 6-7 as necessary.



Ask for feedback from friends, professors, mentors, and anyone who can help!



Do this:

- ✓ If given a prompt or question, write for that prompt. No exceptions.
- ✓ Tell a cohesive story with concrete examples of your potential.
- ✓ Use space wisely - use all the space, be concise, avoid repetition.
- ✓ The first paragraph should be the strongest.
- ✓ Be honest, confident, and focus on strengths.
- ✓ Only ONE thesis - coherence and cohesion matter.
- ✓ Choose your voice carefully and write for your field.
- ✓ Proof read.
- ✓ Ask someone else to proofread.
- ✓ Proofread again.

Tips & Tricks



Do NOT do this:

- ✗ Use the same statement for multiple programs. (Write for your top choice program, if this is not possible.)
- ✗ Slip into emotional catharsis - avoid religion, politics, and personal issues.
- ✗ Include or belabor points that add nothing.
- ✗ Use gimmicks, overused words/phrases, comedy, clichés, empty adjectives, footnotes, etc.
- ✗ Write what you think the committee wants to hear. (They can tell, and you may be wrong.)
- ✗ Repeat yourself. It's an annoying waste of space.