



# Drafting Your Personal Statement

The personal statement is your opportunity to shine in the application process. This is your time to show the committee reviewing your application that you're the perfect fit for their program. You want them to know who you are and why you've applied.

## The Dos and Don'ts of Personal Statements

### COMMON SUGGESTIONS

- Emphasize your specific interest in the program being applied to.
- Highlight your future goals and motivations (academic and career); focus on what your attendance brings you and them.
- Close the distance between you and the reader; let them know who you are.
- Write relevant skills/achievements into the essay as experiences that expand the personal statement.
- Use an active voice and be yourself.

### THINGS TO AVOID

- Cliche; provide specific anecdotes to illustrate.
- Restating your resume and/or creating a list of accomplishments that tell the committee nothing about you.
- Cookie-cutter statements that could be sent to any program.
- Writing FOR the committee rather than TO the committee.
- Digression: When relating to other events or people, make sure that you are reacting and responding with your own thoughts; don't make it all about the other person or event.
- Wordiness; keep the document short and pay attention to word limits.





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## Additional Tips

- Keep it simple and positive; even when writing about a serious experience, write from a positive perspective.
- Consult with current graduate students and professors for insight on the program environment.
- Highlight some courses, professors, or areas of research, that the program provides that align with your goals and interests.
- If there is a gap between your bachelor's and pursuing graduate school, describe what you've been doing; remember to write these experiences in as a means to expand on your intent in pursuing this degree.
- Focus on smooth transitions and flow; keep the document cohesive.
- Write with a theme in mind (e.g., discipline, perseverance, etc.).

