

Writing a Personal Statement

Overview

A personal statement is prepared during an application process, generally for an academic program, internship, or scholarship. Personal statements generally fall into two categories:

1. A **statement** of why you should be considered.
2. A **response** to a specific question or questions. Take note that these questions almost always contain multiple questions, so *be sure you answer all questions asked*.

Brainstorming

So, where to start? Start by freewriting these answers to these questions.

- Why are you a unique candidate?
- What specific experiences set you apart from other applicants?
- What insights lead you to this career?
- What are your career goals?
- What obstacles or hardships (Ex. economic, familial, or physical) in your life set you apart as particularly suited for the program or scholarship?
- How are your personal characteristics and skills well suited to your chosen program or profession?

Order of a Personal Statement

There is no one right way to organize a personal statement; however, organizing your statement into clear paragraphs helps the flow of your statement. Consider the following order of paragraph/section categories when writing, but be flexible:

- ❖ **Begin with a Personal Anecdote:** Share a little about yourself, and what inspired your desired career. Write this in your own voice. This could be about a challenge or obstacle that taught you something, a time you solved a problem, an event that sparked professional growth, or even a concept you find engaging. These are just a few ideas, but stay focused on your purpose. If you are applying for an internship at a software company, a time you solved a computer program would be appropriate. If you are asked about one of your weaknesses, you would not say that you tend to go over your monthly budget. This is too personal. Instead, you might say that you tend to have trouble letting go of ownership of a project. Share something anecdotal that is still professional.
- ❖ **Accomplishments and experience:** Now is not the time to be shy! Mention all relevant accomplishments in a way that exceeds what is found on a resume. A resume might say that you were a research assistant for Dr. West, but your personal statement would say that you “gained invaluable experience assisting Dr. West in research for a New York Times Best Seller.” Feel free to mention experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you have read, seminars you have attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you are suited to it. Make each sentence about your volunteer, academic, and work experiences flow naturally by using topical or chronological order. You need to be very specific!
- ❖ **Academic studies:** What have you done academically that lends to your goal? What courses or internships have prepared you for the program?.

- ❖ **Conclusion/The program you are applying to:** Make sure to close out your personal statement with something about your audience. Why is that school or program your ideal fit? Why do you deserve this particular scholarship? Mention any particular class, instructor, community work, mission statement, organizations, that draws you to your readers. They want to know why you want to be **there** and why **their** program, internship, or scholarship fits your future objectives and goals.

Tips & Tricks

- Find an angle that is fresh and lively!
- Use a professional, but conversational, tone.
- Use very specific examples.
- Avoid T.M.I.
- Research what you are applying for, so you don't write something that is incorrect.
- Proofread, proofread, then proofread again.

Example of an Effective Personal Statement.

Simply put, I am a foodie who loves grocery stores. This love led me to seek an associate's degree in Food and Hospitality Management from Dallas College. But, I found a higher purpose in the grocery business during the height of the pandemic while working at Whole Foods as an in-store shopper. Amidst the crisis, my leadership skills emerged. I was suddenly an essential worker instead of a foodie, and I learned every location of every product in the store. Taking the initiative to learn all the details and layout of the store, I completed orders quickly while using my product knowledge to choose effective substitutions. During this time, 89% of customers who completed a satisfaction survey were satisfied with the substitutions I chose, so I started helping other in-store shoppers complete their orders, especially choosing substitutions, in addition to completing my own orders. For my leadership I was awarded team member of the month in May 2020. Six weeks later I was promoted to an E-Commerce Supervisor and decided to continue my education in business management at Texas Woman's University. I believe I am an ideal fit for your program because I have real world experience to share with my classmates as I learn more academically about business, and I am impressed by the number of student organizations within the College of Business to foster connections. The opportunity to study with such distinguished professors in areas of expertise such as consumer behavior, supply chain management, political activism, and, of course, business management, would well situate me for future advancement in my career in the grocery industry.

Remember a personal statement is often the first opportunity for a reader who can give you something you want (admission to a program, an internship, a scholarship) to get to know you, so don't be afraid to show-off your achievements and all the things that make you a great candidate!



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