WRITING PERSONAL STATEMENTS
ESSAYS FOR GRADUATE ADMISSION & SCHOLARSHIPS

The personal statement is a key component for application to educational programs and financial support (i.e. assistantships). This document typically comprises of a brief history about yourself while addressing your academic and career goals. It is your “voice” and allows you to portray relevant experiences that showcase your strengths and preparation.

Use clear organization and the mechanics of an academic essay by including a strong opening or thesis, details to support your claims, and a clear summarization.

- Read each prompt carefully and make every effort to understand and respond to it.
- Before writing, consider these questions which may shape your composition:
  o What are your career goals?
  o When did you originally become interested in the field?
  o What people or life events shaped or influenced your goals?
  o How have you learned about and explored the field?
  o What work or volunteer experiences contributed to your knowledge?
  o Are there gaps or discrepancies that should be explained?
  o Have you overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships?
  o What personal characteristics enhance your performance?
  o What skills and traits do you bring to the program?
  o Why are you interested in "x" school?
- Tell a story—but be selective without boring the reader with too much detail.
- Concentrate on your opening paragraph to capture attention but do not use quotes.
- Be “non-generic”—your statement should be personal and analytical.
- Avoid obvious clichés, i.e. medical school applicants saying they are good at science, or statements such as “I like working with people”.
- Avoid controversial subjects where readers may have differing opinions from yours—such as religion and politics.
- Type and proofread carefully. DO NOT rely upon spell-check. Have others review.
- Write a draft (it does not have to be perfect initially); seek feedback; be prepared to edit.

Useful resources include professors, friends, family, professionals you have worked with, and the Research-Writing Studio, located in Wilson Library’s Learning Commons area.

Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short. –Henry David Thoreau

References (Available for review in the Career Services Center resource library)

Career Services Center
A unit of Academic & Career Development Services

[Western Washington University]

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