

Writing Effective Personal Statements



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What does "effective" mean?

You are

- introducing yourself to people who will make important decisions about you.
- presenting yourself as a professional in writing.
- differentiating yourself from the other applicants.
- working to "get your foot in the door."
- creating a positive first impression.

Your Personal Statement CLEARLY defines:

- Your past and present--who are you
- Your future--who do you want to be/what are your goals

These two parts must be aligned for you to articulate

- 1) How does what you have done and are doing qualify you for the graduate program
- 2) How will the graduate program advance your goals.

Will You be a Competitive Applicant?

Do you have the

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ Knowledge base | Creativity |
| ■ Maturity | Ability to work well with others |
| ■ Initiative | Responsibility |
| ■ Communication skills | Experiences |

for the graduate program you have selected?

- Your personal statement written *cogently, clearly, and succinctly* and *based on evidence* is the effective answer to this question.

Personal statement

- What a personal statement IS NOT:
 - A biography, ruminations about your life, your struggles to decide on a graduate program
- What a personal statement IS:
 - The effective case that you are a good fit with your selected graduate program

During Monday's webinar, you heard Dr. Martin talk about:

Doing good research to identify graduate programs

Research and Personal Statements: Do they Relate?

- Yes, they DO relate!

How Research can Enhance your Personal Statement

Research allows you to

1. Assess the Program/Institution: Identify strengths/weaknesses of the program
2. Assess Yourself: Clarify your career goals and strengths as an applicant
3. Make the Match: Discuss where these strengths and goals intersect

Points to Consider When Writing

- Purpose
- Format
- Length
- Tone
- Technical Writing
- Clarity, Efficiency and Flow

Timeline for Writing

Begin four months prior to submission deadline. It can be challenging to balance the writing process with other demands.

Five Steps

1. Reflection and Research
2. Writing
3. Customize
4. Submit to Readers
5. Revise and Refine

Step 1: Reflection and Research

- a. Who am I as a candidate?
- b. What are my educational and career goals?
- c. Why am I a "good investment" for a graduate program?

Step 2: Writing

- a. Draft your personal statement based on reflection and research
- b. Employ clear, concise, technical writing
- c. Focus on quality—no misspelled words, correct grammar, accurate punctuation

Examples of Ambiguous Writing

- I am a well-rounded student.
- I go above and beyond.
- I am strong willed.
- I am enthusiastic.
- I have always loved working with people.
- I am a caring person.
- I strive for achievement.

WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE?

Poor Examples continued

- I am very hard working.
- I have good time-management skills.
- I am able to learn and apply information in a real-life setting.
- I would be a great candidate for your program.
- I think that I would be a good match.

▪ WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE?

High Quality Writing Examples

- During my internship, I
- As a research assistant, I....
- Working as a made it clear that
- Being an [give office] required good communication skills for leading and writing
- My experiences such as prepare me for your graduate program because.....

High Quality Writing Sample

"My Senior internship in wildlife biology provided a semester working in western Kansas on prairie dogs' fertility rates. Our team used the findings from Dr. Hays' research, and I am enthusiastic about the prospect of working on my master's degree with Dr. Hays."

Step 3: Customize Statement to Individual Programs

- a. State specifically how the graduate program matches your interests, your preparation, and your professional goals.
- b. State specifically why you believe you have strong potential to succeed. Include previous academic success and other supportive evidence.

Step 4: Submit to Multiple Readers for Review

- a. Allow at least 2 weeks for readers to review your draft
- b. Provide readers with a description of the graduate program
- c. Write a thank you to readers and keep them posted on admission progress

Step 5: Revise and Refine

- Review all suggested revisions and make appropriate changes.
- Reduce length if needed.

Other Considerations

- Assess your professional image
 - Social networking
 - Professional Email address
 - Professional Voice mail greeting
- Align your vita and other application materials with your personal statement.

Other Considerations Continued

- Professional first contact with faculty members at desired institution

You don't have a second chance to make a first impression.

Presenters



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