

## Making the Right Impression | Personal Statements

### ✓ Write the Right Personal Statement:

- There are two kinds of personal statements. Be sure you know which is required of you before you begin writing:
  1. **A general, comprehensive personal statement:** This allows you maximum freedom in terms of what you write and is the type of statement often prepared for standard medical or law school application forms.
  2. **A response to specific questions:** Often, business and graduate school applications ask specific questions, and your statement should respond specifically to the question being asked.

### ✓ Pre-write Before You Begin Writing:

- Start by asking yourself several questions:
  1. When did you become interested in this field?
  2. What experiences, jobs, and/or volunteer work have helped you prepare for this field?
  3. What insights have you gained from those experiences, jobs, volunteer work?
  4. What sets you apart from other applicants?
- Begin by making lists or clusters of your ideas/inventions. Include specific reasons, examples, skills, career goals, awards, etc., for brainstorming purposes (and remember you can always remove things later if you decide).



### ✓ Answer The Questions Being Asked:

- You may discover similarities between questions in each application's personal statement requirements. It's important to remember to **NOT** use the same statement for all of your applications, though. In each of statements, make sure you are answering the questions being asked, and addressing the specific school you are applying to.

### ✓ Grab Your Reader's Attention:

- You want to avoid boring the admissions committee - Begin your statement with a relevant story of how you became interested in the field, or find a cool quote that pertains to your field or work philosophy. In other words, find an angle that hooks your reader's attention.
- Be sure to concentrate on your opening paragraph. It is the key to grabbing your reader's attention and to helping you organize the rest of your statement.

### ✓ Be Specific:

- Don't write blanket statements, such as, "I'd make the best lawyer ever." Instead, show and tell them why with specific examples or anecdotes. For instance, if this is a medical school personal statement, you might want to give specific reasons for why your internship with a local doctor led you to this path.
- And remember, although being specific involves giving examples of your experiences, the stories should be concise and relevant

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to the field. Your goal is to sell yourself in the application, not to sell your life story.

✓ **Tell What You Know:**

- The middle section of your personal statement should discuss your interest in the field as well as your knowledge of the field. Relate your experiences to what you know about. Compare how your qualities and abilities are similar to those in the field.
- Be specific. Use the vocabulary of the field when conveying what you've learned about and experienced in the field thus far.
- Refer to books, classes, conferences, seminars, articles, conversations, and other specific resources about the field that would convey your interest and knowledge to your readers.

✓ **Do Some Research:**

- Find out why you want to apply to a certain school, and include this information in your personal statement. Schools want to know that you know about their reputation, standards, and achievements. Basically, they want to know what sets them apart from other schools you have chosen.
- Mention specific faculty your looking forward to working with (perhaps your areas of research overlap); also mention how your specific experiences and background will be a benefit to the school This isn't a one-way street here - as much as the school will be helping you, you'll be bringing something to the table as well, perhaps through your teaching or research assistantship...

✓ **Avoid Clichés:**

- Don't say you want to be a doctor because you're good at science. Statements like these are tired and unoriginal and are often not well regarded by admissions committees. Show readers that you know how to express original thoughts.

✓ **Proofread. Proofread. Proofread:**

- Command of language shows you know how to communicate clearly and intelligently—something admission committees are looking for. Strive for perfection. Type carefully. Proofread *several times* and then have someone else look it over, either a teacher or mentor, or a friendly consultant here at the BGSU Writing Center!

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Adapted from the Purdue Online Writer's Lab <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01>>, and from Amanda McGuire (2004) "Personal Statements". Created for the BGSU Writing Center.