

Writing the Personal Statement

Although graduate programs may weigh them differently, the personal statement is an important piece of the application process. It is your opportunity to introduce yourself as an individual. There is no correct way to write a personal statement, but you can enhance your statement by following some general guidelines listed below.

- **Know your purpose for applying:** be specific and clear about what you want to study and what you hope to accomplish as a student and graduate of the program.
- **Show your unique and thorough preparation:** think about how your academic and extra-curricular backgrounds have prepared you for graduate studies. Use the language of the discipline and specialization.
- **Know your audience:** although graduate programs might seem similar on the surface, they are not the same. Do some research to learn specifics about your program of interest and tailor your statement to their strengths and interest. Do not use the same letter for each application.
- **Provide depth not breadth:** do not simply list a series of interest or accomplishments; the application package will provide the admissions committee a broad overview. Take time to dig deeply into a couple of your interest and think about how they relate to the interest/purpose of the program.
- **Write several drafts and ask for feedback:** ask your professors, advisors, and friends to review your essay.
- **Follow the directions:** if the program list certain criteria for the essay (such as a word count maximum), stick to that requirement.
- **Be personal/tell a story:** the personal statement is *personal*. The committee will not know anything about you unless you tell them.
- **Find an angle/make connections in your essay:** the statement should be cohesive throughout. All of the content should have a purpose for being included and should connect to the other content present.
- **Revise:** do not let the committee question your qualification because of typos and grammatical errors.