

## Personal Statements

Personal statements are staples in applications for graduate and professional school, and may be required for applications for service programs, fellowships, and more. Personal statements, a 1-2 page document sometimes referred to as a goals statement or a statement of purpose, may be intimidating to write, but here are some tips to make sure you're on the right track.

- **Get the attention of your reader.**
  - Your personal statement should hook your reader as soon as possible: the opening paragraph is vital to getting your reader's attention.
  - Tell your story of why you are applying to this school/program, and use it to help yourself stand out and be memorable in a good way.
- **Highlight your motivations for applying.**
  - Make it clear that you are actively applying to this school/program, not avoiding the world of work.
  - Be specific – what about this specific school/program are you interested in?
- **Highlight what makes you stand out.**
  - Focus on your accomplishments, as well as obstacles you have overcome.
  - Highlight achievements relevant to the school/program.
  - Mention specific courses that are especially meaningful.
- **Watch out for the balance between breadth and depth.**
  - Discuss extracurricular activities within the field. Do not be worried if lower in number-it matters more that the experiences are meaningful and ongoing vs. numerous and brief.
- **Maintain a positive and confident tone.**
  - While you may need to address a low GPA or weak test score, do it briefly. Don't let it overpower the positive qualifications you have.
- **Address any specific questions outlined in the application.**
  - If the school or program has identified certain questions, be sure to address them in your personal statement.
- **Write creatively, but clearly and concisely.**
  - Adhere to any length requirements outlined by the school or program.
  - Have your essay reviewed by trusted faculty, advisors, school writing center for feedback and suggestions.