How to Write a Personal Statement

What is a personal statement?
A personal statement is the portion of your graduate school application in which you get the opportunity to give a voice to your application. This writing is where you show the university who you are as a person, what achievements you’ve made, and why you’d be a valuable asset to their program.

Before You Write
- Review the prompt and instructions of the personal statement so that you know what is expected of you.
- Reflect on what makes you stand out from other applicants.
- Take account of significant events in your life that are unique to you. Use these to express your personality as well as your goals in life.
- Utilize your friends, family, and colleagues. You can ask them for help in brainstorming ideas as well as getting a fresh perspective on your personal statement.

Writing your Personal Statement: Content*
- As you are writing your statement, reflect on the uniqueness of your work. You want this to be something that no one else could write, so make sure your ideas and words are personal.
- Use your writing to demonstrate your personality. The school wants to know what you are like as a person. Don’t be a robot!
- Never make your personal statement a narrative of your resume; the rest of your application will involve this information.
- Get creative! Your opening sentences should get the readers interested in your essay, and the language you use in your paper should keep them captivated with your work.
- If you are asked about your background or experience, make sure to discuss it in relation to who you are as a person. How did this experience shape your ideas, personality, etc.
- Although not everyone considers themselves to be particularly unique, many schools will ask how you will contribute to their campus’s diversity. If you’re stumped, think about an interesting family member, teacher, event, or anything that affected your life somehow.

Writing your Personal Statement: Style and Format
- There are some things about turning in your personal statement that are easy to remember: Always proofread carefully to avoid typos, and make sure you send the right personal statement to the right school (if you’re applying to multiple schools).
- Because they are so short, it is not completely necessary to include an introduction and conclusion in your personal statement. Avoid saying things like “Hi, my name is…” or “Thank you for reading”.

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• It is also smart to avoid using an unconventional writing style; this may come across as inappropriate. This can include things like referring to yourself in the third person or writing in the style of a poem or song, which is almost never appropriate.

• Except for performing arts school, most schools will ask you to resubmit applications that are submitted in audio or visual format.

• Don’t veer too far from the norm with your font. Keep it around size 11 or 12, and use a readable font.

• Page and word limits are there for a reason, so be sure to follow them. Excess material is likely to go unread. If there aren’t strict guidelines for this from the school, keep your format simple and traditional to sustain readability.

• While it’s perfectly acceptable to have someone edit your essay for grammar and style, never allow someone to rewrite your paper for you.