

A personal statement is an essay submitted as part of an application to a graduate program, impression of you as the applicant beyond what is written on your transcript or resume. In an ideal personal statement, you will answer a general prompt with a narrative or anecdote that highlights your unique traits, abilities, and experiences.

First, a personal statement should answer the prompt. All stories, anecdotes, and other explanations should be framed as answers to the prompt. Second, personal statements should discuss topics that are not clearly illustrated in your existing documentation, such as extracurricular experiences, personal interests and motivations, and your goals for the future. Third, personal statements should express your voice clearly and be free of all spelling and grammar issues.

Answer the Question

Whether or not you answer the given question has the potential to make or break your personal talk about a time when you baked cookies for homeless people (unless the two somehow relate).

If you are asked more than one question, make sure that you cover them all clearly! Study the prompt carefully before you begin drafting a response. Even if the prompt appears to only be one question, it may still be deceptively complex. This is a common strategy to weed out applicants. Do not let this tactic filter you out before you even begin to work on your personal statement.

If you are given a word limit, make sure you do not ignore or exceed the limit. Treat a word count limit like it is a maximum value. Respecting the limit shows that you are capable of following directions and expressing yourself concisely. A personal statement that is at or slightly below the word count is ideal.

Reveal Something Unique About Yourself

Most modern admissions programs use the personal statement as a window into your life beyond what transcripts or letters of recommendation can say about you. Avoid writing about the straight you earned as an undergraduate (for example); you have been given a limited word count in which to reveal something more personal. Work on highlighting why you are what the program or scholarship is looking for. Use your essay to explain why you are more qualified than

Things to Include

Like any good narrative, make sure your personal statement has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your readers should be drawn in from the first sentence. Each body paragraph should be relevant to your theme or highlight something new about you. Keep major ideas in their own paragraphs, and ensure that the flow of information is steady, logical, and clearly explained.

Things to Avoid

Avoid disconnected rambling. Admissions committees must read thousands of personal statements, and a disorganized first impression can ruin an otherwise perfect application. Do not spoil a good introductory first impression with a poorly organized body and conclusion. When changing subjects, avoid confusion or messy transitions by clearly relating connections between subjects in the first sentence of a new paragraph. Deeper

4. I was given a lot of different tasks that scared me, but I easily overcame the challenge.

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