

Personal Statements

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1 Questions to Consider as you Prepare to Write:

Get out some scratch paper and brainstorm the answers to these questions to jumpstart the process.

- What do I want my audience to understand about me?
- What is distinctive and impressive about me?
- What have I accomplished?
- What kinds of challenges have I faced and overcome or learned to manage?
- What events or experiences have I engaged in that would be interesting to the committee and relevant to my application?
- What are my best skills or qualities?
- Why am I interested in this field/job/internship, etc.?
- Why should the committee pick me?

2 Things to Keep in Mind While You Write:

A personal statement is your opportunity to show who you are—your accomplishments, goals, personality, etc. Focus on specific experiences and avoid *listing* achievements and grades. That's what resumes are for.

- Be your authentic self! Avoid clichés, jokes, analogies, generalizations, & quotes.
- Focus on experiences during college years.
- Avoid controversial subjects.
- Tell the committee why your experiences are relevant and impressive. Elaborate on what they taught you.
- Remember that you are asking a committee to invest *money* in you. Explain how you will contribute to their school/company and the larger field instead of discussing what the opportunity will do for you.

3 Drafting Tips:

When writing your first draft, accept that you will have to revise **a lot**. Let your ideas flow freely, and save the revising, editing, and proofreading for later.

- Try to find an angle, theme, or some other way to make your statement cohesive. It may be a concept or event that comes up in the intro and conclusion or a thread that goes throughout.
- Prove it! Don't just tell them you're a self-starter; tell them about how you founded the Henry James Reading Group on campus.
- Use positive language. Instead of "I do not shy away from leadership roles." Try "In groups, I gravitate toward leadership roles. For instance..."

Remember! These stages are not exclusive. Move back and forth as much as you need to in order to craft an effective and polished personal statement!

4 Revising your Personal Statement:

Read your statement and ask yourself these questions. Revise until you like the answers. This is also a good time to refer back to the questions in the first box.

- Have I answered the prompt? Do I have a clear message?
- Do I have an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion? Is my opening paragraph compelling, interesting, and persuasive?
- Do my paragraphs make sense in this order? Am I repeating myself? Do I have any holes in my structure?
- Do I need to be more selective? Meaning, have I chosen to highlight my most impressive and relevant strengths? Or do I still need to cut out padding?
- Are my topic sentences particularly well-written and clear? (Often, search committees are pressed for time. Make their job easy!)
- Are my paragraphs too long?

5 Editing your Personal Statement:

Read your statement *out loud*. Think about how it sounds and how to make it sound better.

- Do I sound positive, knowledgeable, and confident (but not snobby)? Am I being respectful of my audience (not shocking)?
- Eliminate or replace words and phrases like “this,” “thing,” “there,” “that,” “kind of,” “really,” “basically,” and “very.”
- Vary your sentence structures—connect short sentences and break up long sentences as needed.

6 Proofreading your Personal Statement:

You’re almost done! Proofread carefully so that you can present an error-free and polished statement.

- Cover up everything except the last sentence. Check it for punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors. Go backwards through your statement correcting as you go.
- Ask APU’s Writing Center, friends, and mentors for help! We’re here for you!

DONE!