

# 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!**