



Personal Statements

A personal statement is a professional short story about you paired with a résumé, explaining why you want to work somewhere and how they would benefit from your skills. It is your chance to expand on your résumé to give more depth to your qualifications.

How do I draft a personal statement?

Prepare to tailor every single statement specifically to the place you are applying. While you may be able to create a *rough* template, one generalized personal statement will *not* be strong enough for any institution.

First, review the institution's requirements for the personal statement.

- Sometimes they ask you to answer a specific question or follow a certain theme, and they usually have a word or character limit.

Second, research the institution's mission statement, values, and staff.

- Keep notes on their keywords and phrases.
- **Graduate School:** Research your department and find one or two professors you would be excited to work with and why.

Third, brainstorm unique/unusual and motivated stories that are related to you.

- Be **personal** and **detailed**.
- Feel free to bring up your résumé for a couple of ideas. Maybe there is something in your résumé that you want to expand on.
- What experiences, jobs, and people inspired you to succeed in your career? Why have you chosen this institution to apply to? Have you worked at a place like this before?

Fourth, create a theme or angle with your stories and keywords.

- Develop a thoughtful theme that follows the requirements.
- **Graduate School**: Focus on your academic journey and your reason/s for wanting to continue.
- **Medical Residency**: Focus on your journey through the medical field and your reason/s for wanting to continue.

Fifth, outline a rough draft. Feel free to find **online examples and templates**.

- Committees read hundreds of statements, so focus on clarity and specificity.
- **Show, do not tell!**
 - Instead of writing that you are passionate, do you have a story that shows how much you care about others and your career?
- For the outline, make sure to...
 - organize your statement by chronology (time), theme, and/or goals.
 - create a hook at the start to grab attention.
 - **utilize your keywords and research from the second step.**
 - Do not mention *everything* word for word. Expand on it with synonyms, stories, experiences, leadership, and accomplishments!
 - expand on the résumé and not repeat it.
 - be confident by using specific action verbs and direct sentences.
 - **Graduate School**: mention the professors you want to work with and why.
 - **Medical Residency**: focus on medical knowledge and stories.
 - leave out high school, unless completely relevant.
 - avoid clichés.

Sixth, draft the personal statement. Start as early as possible.

- **Default to** professional 11 or 12 pt. fonts, indented paragraphs, and double-spaced.
- At first, just try to get words on the page.

Seventh, prepare to revise as much as you can.

- Reach out to **professors, peers, and the Writing Center** to receive diverse feedback.

Eighth, do not title it.

- You may center “Personal Statement” and your name at the top if it looks professional and does not interfere with the character, word, or page limit.

Ninth, before submission, edit, proofread, edit, and proofread again.

- Review the **grammar and sentence variety** to ensure that your paper feels professional, lively, and engaging.
- Read your paper backwards to catch spelling errors.