

Tips for writing a Personal Statement

The point of a personal statement is for the admissions board to understand who you are apart from your education and work experience. It explains why you are the right fit for the program and a worthwhile applicant. It is also an opportunity to highlight important factors that may not be readily available in the rest of your application.

A personal statement is different from a statement of purpose. A statement of purpose will touch on your academic and career goals and your past credentials. While those should also be discussed in your personal statement, it is more about your life experiences and how they have shaped you and your journey to graduate school.

Questions to Ask Yourself Before Writing a Personal Statement

Before you start crafting your essay, there are a few prompts you can ask yourself to help clarify what you want to accomplish.

- What are the key points you want to communicate about yourself?
- What personal characteristics or skills do you have that make you a strong candidate for this field?
- What exactly are your career goals, and how does study at the master's degree program play into them?
- What have you learned about this field already? When did you first choose to follow this path, and what do you enjoy about it?
- What do you think is necessary for the admissions board to know specifically about you?
- Are there any discrepancies or causes for concern in your application you need to address? For example, is there a career and schooling gap or a low GPA at one point? This is the time to discuss whether a personal hardship may have affected your academics or career.
- Have you dealt with any unusual obstacles or difficulties in your life? How have they affected and shaped you?
- What sets you apart and makes you unique from other master's degree program applicants?
- What factors in your life have brought you to where you are today?

Top Tips for Writing a Graduate School Personal Statement

Pick a few points to emphasize about yourself. Introduce yourself to the admissions board. Select key factors about your background that you want the university to know — elements that reveal what kind of person you are and demonstrate why you are a strong candidate for the school and field of study.

Be very specific. Again, a personal statement is all about communicating what distinguishes you from other applicants. You need to share anecdotes that underscore your statements to accomplish that. If you say you are a strong leader, present an example of a time you have proven that skill through work, school, or personal life. These specific, personal stories provide a deeper understanding of who you are and prove your intentions.

Do your research. Demonstrate what attracted you to the program. If there is a specific faculty member or class that caught your attention or another aspect of the program that greatly interests you, convey it. This shows you have truly researched the school and passion for the program.

Address any gaps or discrepancies. Explain any factors that may have impacted your academic career. Discuss them if you had an illness or any other personal hardships that affected your grades or work. Suppose there is a discrepancy between your grades and your test scores. In that case, you can also take the time to go over any extenuating circumstances.

Strike the right tone. While it is important to give readers a glimpse of your personality, avoid oversharing or revealing intimate details of your life experiences. You should also avoid making jokes or using humorous clichés. Maintain a professional tone throughout your writing.

Start strong and finish strong. As with any piece of writing, you want to draw in your readers immediately. Make sure to start with an interesting and captivating introduction. Similarly, your conclusion should be a well-written, engaging finish to the essay that highlights any important points.

Proofread, proofread, and proofread again. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of rereading your work. Your personal statement is also an analysis of your writing skills, so ensure you have proper grammar and spelling throughout. In addition, we recommend having multiple people look over your statement before submission. They can help with the proofreading advice about the statement's structure and content and confirm it's the proper recommended length.