

Get Into Your Dream Major – The WRITE Way!

Presented by:



Icebreaker!

First:

Turn to the person around you. Introduce yourself. What's your intended major? Which part of the application is scariest to you?

Then:

On a scrap piece of paper, write down one worry that you have in thinking about the application or personal statement.

Icebreaker deux

Now that you have written out some of your negative thoughts...

Rip those negative thoughts up!

(but please don't forget to clean up!)

Learning Outcomes

- Gain an understanding of what the personal statement is for and who is going to read it so that you will have a better idea of how to write a statement that is effective.
- Practice thinking through some of the decisions you would need to make in writing a personal statement.

Purpose of Personal Statements

What is the personal statement *for*?

How is it different from the other materials you might have to include in an application?

Purpose of Personal Statements Revealed

The statement is designed to do several things:

1. Tell the reader(s) something about you and why you should be accepted to the school that they cannot learn from reviewing your transcripts, test scores, CV, or other materials.
2. Demonstrate that you can write clearly, coherently and effectively.

Who even reads personal statements?

Why might it be helpful to think about who will be reading your essays?

The Importance of Audience Awareness

- If you are applying to an undergraduate major, then you should address how it is relevant to your educational and professional goals.
- If you are applying for a graduate program, then you should consider what that discipline values. They will want to know why you chose this program and why you think you will do well in it for the long term.
- If you are writing for a study abroad or an internship, your audience may be interested in how their program will fit into your larger goals.
- Remember that your reader will be reading ALL your materials, so you shouldn't repeat yourself!

One Common Model for Personal Statements

Often, readers of statements want to see you answer three general questions:

- **Why them?** Why are you applying to *this* school, department, internship, or program and not some other? What is special about them?
- **Why you?** What is special about you? What is in your background, interests, or achievements that shows you are an ideal candidate?
- **Why now?** Why are you applying at this point in your life? How does this decision fit in with your long term goals?

Use the Personal Statement to Tell a Story

Don't be afraid to get personal!

- If the prompt is asking you talk about something you **accomplished** or a **challenge** you faced, use your PS to tell a story about the kind of person you are and how that accomplishment or challenge affected, influenced, or changed you.
- Be specific. Good stories have **details** in them that make them seem believable and that bring the story to life.
- **Hook** your reader from the first sentence! The first sentence should make the reader interested in going on to the next.

Structuring Your Story

- There should be a **central idea** that your essay is trying to convey. Whatever the central idea is, don't just tell us; **write a story that shows us**.
- Every paragraph should **lead to the next** paragraph.
- Each paragraph should **relate back to your central idea**. Think of your story as being like a kebab; each paragraph is the meat and the central idea is the stick that runs through each piece of meat and holds the whole essay together.

Avoid Cliches!

Avoid “Cute” or “Cliché” Descriptions of Your Motivation and Interests

Every year the faculty on the admissions committee read about Legos in the personal statements of several applicants. Many students who pursue engineering enjoyed playing with Lego bricks as children (and maybe even still do). Perhaps you look back at your enjoyment of Legos as an early indicator that you were “meant to be an engineer” but the faculty likely do not believe that a student's attraction to playing with plastic blocks has any correlation with their potential success as engineers.

<http://www.engr.washington.edu/current/admissions/statement>

Editing, Revision, and Proofreading

- Writing is a **process**. Just writing one draft and then proofreading for spelling and grammar is not enough.
- **Edit**: Read through your essay aloud and have other people read it.
- **Revise**: Rewrite the parts that don't work or add new things. Keep editing and revising until you have something that feels right.
- **Proofread**: Finally, read each sentence closely to find problems with grammar and spelling.

What is the OWRC?

- Odegaard Writing and Research Center is a free resource, open to anyone on campus, at any stage of the writing process.
- Located on the ground floor of Odegaard Library, OWRC offers 45 minute appointments that you can sign up for online.
- Conversations about your writing:
 - Our job is to ask the right questions to get researchers and writers talking about their projects, about their ideas, about their field, about what they're trying to accomplish, and about their own past experiences. We hope that the writers we work with become more confident, more independent, and more comfortable—but also more sophisticated about their own research, writing, and learning.



Located in **Odegaard Undergraduate Library Room 121**

Appointments available in person and online!

Learn more and schedule an appointment on the **OWRC website**

Hours:

Monday to Thursday: 9:30am - 7:30pm

Friday: 9:30am - 3:30pm

Sunday: 3:30pm - 7:30pm

Book online, book early: during busy times, we often operate at full capacity!

Drop-ins: available on a limited basis

Cancelling: OK with a 2 hour notice!

Join us at the OWRC Open House in Odegaard 121 from 2-4pm today!

Try it out!

Now that we've talked about OWRC's communication-based approach to feedback, let's all work on beginning our cohesive story! Afterwards, we'll swap stories with people around us to get their input...

Try it out!

- First, think of a “hook” story you might use to catch readers’ attention. It can be sad, happy, informative, funny, but most importantly, IT MUST BE ABOUT YOU!
- Jot down some details about the story. Why do you think it is catchy? How does it connect to your desired field?
- Freewrite -- write as you wish. You may write paragraphs, or a tiered bulleted list. Write down whatever details come to mind about your story.

Now, swap!

Turn to a neighbor, and for the next 10 minutes, talk your stories over together.

First, have one person share a story. The listener will then ask clarifying questions about unclear parts, including the connection to the field.

Remember the OWRC's conversation-based approach. We're not being corrective; instead we're asking questions to better understand the importance of the story.

Then, after 5 minutes, swap roles and repeat process.

Swap roles!

Have the second person share a story. The listener will then ask clarifying questions about unclear parts, including the connection to the field.

Remember the OWRC's conversation-based approach. We're not being corrective; instead we're asking questions to better understand the importance of the story.

Personal statement T.I.P.S

1. Take your time / Tone
2. Inquire about yourself / Interest
3. Personalize / Priorities
4. Specificity



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