# Personal Statements

## Why personal statements?

An application includes many parts-- letters of recommendation, a resume, test scores, etc.—that all tell your selection committee *what* you’ve done. Your personal statement is a great place to let them know *who* you are. They want to see the character and habits that will make you a successful fit at their school, job or program.

## Think like an admissions committee.

They’ve probably read dozens, if not hundreds, of these applications already. They’re tired. They’ve already had several cups of coffee. And they’re probably only going to read your personal statement once. So while you’ve read your statement a million times, agonizing over all the subtle themes you’re demonstrating, they will probably value simple, surprising and sincere writing.

* Come up with a “bumper sticker” version of your story. Keep it short enough to write on a post-it note. Maybe your story is “I was a patient; I want to be a doctor,” or “The law school Rocky.” Keep your “bumper sticker” story in mind as you work on your personal statement. NOTE: You are a wonderful, multi-faceted, complex individual. But you also have a word count limit. It’s better to focus on a few aspects than try to include all elements of your life, and it will be easier for the admissions committee to remember who you are.
* Be sincere and avoid clichés. If everyone is writing “ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be a doctor,” then that might not come across as sincere. This is a *personal* statement. Get personal. Avoid statements or stories that could apply to anyone rather than you in specific.
* Be interesting. Using stories, humor, concrete details and unexpected turns will wake up those tired admissions committee types and help them remember your personal statement. But do make sure that they remember you in a good way, rather than as the person who did something gimmicky, like writing in all caps or talking in the third person all the time.
* Demonstrate values the committee admires. What does it take to succeed in your field?
* Keep the rules. Don’t exceed the word limit, make sure you proofread carefully, and double-check that you answer the prompt. Make it easy for them to read.

## Remember how awesome you are.

Personal statements can be emotionally daunting. You have to be confident without being arrogant. You have to project a plan for your whole life, even if you aren’t sure what classes you’re taking next semester. You have to try to figure out who you are and how you fit. Be prepared to feel overwhelmed at times, and remember that everyone is going through the same thing. Give yourself plenty of time to revise and plenty of pep talks. At some point, you’ll have to actually turn it in. Don’t dread that moment. You’ve been preparing your whole life for who you are right now. You’re ready.

## Personal Statements- Resources

## General

## Walk-in

* <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

The University Writing Center offers presentations on personal statements. Ask your consultant or go online to view the presentation’s slide deck.

* <http://ugs.utexas.edu/vick/career/gradschool/personal-statements>

The Vick Center for Strategic Advising and Career Counseling can meet with you to look over a draft or talk about what your particular field is looking for in a personal statement.

**Online**

* <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/writing-personal-statements-for-ph-d-programs/>

The University of Wisconsin at Madison Writing Center includes general advice about each step of the writing process—includes special help with an essay’s introduction.

* <https://www.askamanager.org/2020/07/heres-a-bunch-of-help-finding-a-new-job.html>

This website provides a variety of useful information related to job searches. It addresses personal statements in the context of applying for internships.

## Fellowships and Scholarships

* <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/FS/essays.html>

From Worcester Polytechnic Institute for writing scholarship applications. Includes links to helpful articles.

* <https://willamette.edu/offices/saga/students/applicationprocess/personal-statements/index.html>

From Willamette University for writing scholarship essays. Includes help with personal statements and advice from prestigious fellowship committees.

## Pre-Law

* <http://www.accepted.com/law/sampleessays.aspx>

Sample essays from Accepted.com to show you successful approaches for the law school personal statement.

## Pre-Med

* <https://cns.utexas.edu/health-professions/current-student-resources/application-resources>

This website includes useful tools for drafting a personal statement for the health professions, such as word lists and a brainstorming worksheet.