

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Write it Right

Tips on Writing a Good Personal Statement for your Graduate School Application

Think of it as a “professional” statement

It is important to outline your professional objectives in your personal statement. Be sure to include your professional accomplishments, including any research you have done, and explain what you know. Tell why you might be a stronger candidate for graduate school than any other applicant using the language professionals use in conveying this information.

Answer the questions that are asked

Be clear and specific to all questions asked on the application. For instance, if a university wants to know why you are applying to it rather than another school, do some research on what sets your preferred school apart from the rest. Importantly, don't be tempted to re-use your personal statement on all applications you submit; rather, be sure your answer fits the question being asked.

Write well and meticulously

It is essential to use proper grammar and avoid all typographical errors and clichés. As with any good writing effort, it is critical to focus on the opening paragraph to grab the reader's attention and create the framework for the rest of the statement. It also is important to adhere to stated word limits on your application.

Avoid inappropriate subjects

References to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier are not appropriate for a personal statement and should be excluded. Likewise, potentially controversial issues are best avoided.

Five questions to think about

1. What are my career objectives and what skills have I developed that will help me achieve these objectives?
2. Why is this the best program for me?
3. How do my research interests and experiences fit the expertise of the faculty in the program?
4. What has stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited for the field (classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences or conversations with people already in the field)?
5. Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that should be explained (great grades but mediocre test scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?