Writing Personal Statements

What is a Personal Statement?

A personal statement **Is**…

- A snapshot of who you are as a person.
- An invitation to bridge the assumed distance between readers and you.
- An indication of your priorities and judgment.
- Your own story with creativity and meaningful self-reflection.

A personal statement **Is Not**…

- An academic paper.
- A resume in narrative form.
- A journal entry: both individual and professional voice are needed.
- A plea or justification.

Adopted from Mary Tolar

Types of the Personal Statement

- **General statements:** You write about yourself. It gives maximum freedom in writing. (e.g., standard medical and law school applications)
- **Specific essays:** The topic is assigned for you. It asks for responses to one or more specific questions. (e.g., business and graduate program applications)

Writing Tips

- Answer the questions being asked.
- Concentrate on the first paragraph. Start with an interesting opening that can grab the reader’s attention.
- Be specific. Offer examples from your life and be sure to relate them to your goals logically. Explain how and why those experiences have shaped your attitude and intellectual vitality.
- Present information in a logical order. You may follow the chronological order which is used frequently, or choose another way, such as the order from least to most important thing or categorization (e.g. academic experience, volunteer experience, working experience, etc.)
- Find an angle. Show what makes you different from other applicants.
- Avoid clichés. Do not use often-repeated expressions.
- Write honestly!
- Write correctly. Type and proofread your essay very carefully.
Examples

- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/02/)

Resources/links

- [http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/](http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/)
- [http://www.brynmawr.edu/deans/fellowships/fellowships_advice.html](http://www.brynmawr.edu/deans/fellowships/fellowships_advice.html)