

## What is a Personal Statement?

Simply put, a personal statement is your introduction to an admissions counselor or a selection committee beyond what is found in your application.

- It reveals who you are and what you care about.
- It answers the questions: What is unique about you? What sets you apart? What makes you a good fit for the college or scholarship.
- It provides the opportunity to make your application memorable.

## Typical Prompts

1. General, comprehensive statement
2. Response to a specific question

## Brainstorm Topics (This is *not* a comprehensive list!)

- A personal achievement or challenge - if you choose a challenge, how did you overcome it?
- Leadership opportunity - Define your role or accomplishment and what you learned.
- Experience outside of the classroom - Consider experiences that have impacted your life and share the effect of the impact (family, youth group, work, travel, church/temple, etc.).
- Culture/Traditions- Describe the influence that culture and/or family traditions have had on you and what you have learned as a result.

## General Advice

- Your topic is the tool you are using, not the purpose of the essay.  
Use your (story, experience, etc.) to highlight your strengths, personality or future goals. Be careful not to focus on the story or experience itself - it is a tool to introduce who you are and set yourself apart from other candidates.
- Write persuasively.  
Be careful not to turn your essay into a listing of what is already found in your application. Expand on your topic to highlight specific examples that support your point and allow the reader to get to know you more.
- Use "I" statements.  
The purpose of the personal statement is for the reader to get to know you! Don't be afraid to talk about yourself - just make sure that you are purposeful in what you are sharing.
- Stand out!  
Admissions representatives and scholarship committees read a LOT of personal statements! How will you stand out? What is your hook, or how will you grab their attention so that they remember you later? This might be the greatest challenge of writing your personal statement, but also the most important piece of advice.
- Proofread and Edit.  
Be sure to write clearly and concisely. While grammar, spelling, and sentence structure aren't "graded", it does reflect your attention to detail and abilities as a potential college student. Invite multiple other people to proofread your statement before you submit.
- Try to avoid:
  - Clichés:** Avoid broad generalizations about careers and future goals. ie. "I want to go into the medical field because I like science and I want to find a cure for cancer." or "I plan to major in social work services because I like to help people." Most likely, everyone in these fields have this in common. Remember, set yourself apart!
  - Uncomfortable or Controversial Topics:** Generally it is best to avoid introducing yourself with a story that is highly personal or a topic that has a lot of differing opinions. Some topics to consider avoiding include family/friend deaths, traumatic experiences, deeply personal information, controversial religious or political issues, etc. Remember, the reader is meeting you for the first time so be careful not to overshare.

### Sources

<https://www.loyola.edu/departments/national-fellowships/resources/personal-statement>

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job\\_search\\_writing/preparing\\_an\\_application/writing\\_the\\_personal\\_statement/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/preparing_an_application/writing_the_personal_statement/index.html)

<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/files/uc-personal-statement-guide-freshman-2015.pdf>