

The Personal Statement for College Application or Scholarship

If you are applying to a 4-year university or to scholarships, you will likely be asked to write a “personal statement” also referred to as a “statement of intent” or a “statement of purpose”.

A personal statement is a piece of short writing, often around 500 words, that lets you explain your motivations, experience, and goals to encourage a group of reviewers to accept your application.

Some colleges, scholarships, or programs may give you directions for how to write the statement and might provide questions or prompts that you can respond to. This is not always the case. This guide will provide you with resources that explain how to draft and revise the statement and provide tips and samples to help you complete this part of the application process.

Parts of the Statement

Your statement should include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Make sure that you read the instructions for your statement carefully before you begin.

Introduction

Like any good essay, the introduction should grab your reader’s attention and let them know what you’ll be writing about.

Start with an interesting and relevant statement. Then, share the main idea of your statement. It’s a good idea to introduce one or more relevant personal experiences from the start. What has inspired you to be interested in your intended field of study?

Body Paragraph

The body of the paper should be the longest section of your statement. Elaborate on two or three specific experiences you mentioned in your introduction paragraph, and explain how you gained skills, expertise, and insight that would make you a good addition/fit/asset to the program (scholarship) you are applying to.

This is also a good place to discuss any weaknesses you might have. If your GPA is not great, discuss the reasons why it is not great and what you have learned from this experience. Perhaps there were specific circumstances that hindered you from achieving your best. Ensure that you do not use these as excuses but highlight how you overcame challenges/problems or issues. End this part of your narrative on a positive note. Show that you have learned skills, insights, or emotional growth that you might not have had if it were not for that challenge.

Conclusion

End with a brief section that will stick with the reader. Emphasize why this program is important to you and finish the statement on a positive note. This would be a good place to discuss your long-term goals. For example, how will this program help you reach your goals, and why will this matter in 5 Years? Why is it essential that your application be accepted?

Helpful Tips

Follow the directions provided

Use the program/college/scholarship suggested formatting guidelines and/or questions if they are available. Be aware of due dates, word count, formatting guidelines, and style guides.

Make it personal

Avoid clichés and instead talk about unique and relevant experiences you have had. The essay should reflect your personality in the best possible way.

Do your research

Find out information about the program you are applying to and its faculty so you can mention this in your essay and discuss why that makes you a good fit for the program, and vice versa.

Do not reuse the same statement

If you are applying to multiple programs, such as different colleges, submit a different statement to each. You can use the same ideas if they are relevant, but each statement should be fine-tuned to appeal to the individual program you will be submitting it to.

Proofread your essay, get feedback, and revise

Once your essay is written, carefully edit typos and other mistakes. It is a good idea to bring your essay to the TSC Learning Commons and have a tutor provide you with feedback. Make revisions as needed.