

Personal Statement

The personal statement is your opportunity to inform the graduate school admissions committee why you want to be accepted and in what way you are qualified to be a graduate student. Your personal statement may vary depending on the application instructions for the program. Some applications may ask you to respond to specific questions, while others may ask for a general statement. It is a good idea to reflect on your personal statement before you write it, thinking about why you are applying to the type of program you have chosen and what experiences or qualities you have that may help persuade the admissions committee to admit you into their program. It is important to discuss activities such as research experience, leadership responsibilities, community service, and honors activities or awards. It is also important to show that you have challenged yourself academically by taking some of the more difficult classes or being a member of an honors program.

You should explain why you have chosen the program that you are applying to. If you are aware of one or two faculty members at the school you wish to work with, identify them in your personal statement to make it clear that you are familiar with the program and that you have interests that match the program's faculty. Depending on the type of program, it may even be appropriate to contact the faculty you wish to work with ahead of time, so they are familiar with your name before your application is submitted. For research-oriented graduate programs, this is strongly recommended. It is generally a bad idea to make excuses for your weaknesses in your personal statement. Let your references do that for you.

The personal statement also gives the admissions committee a chance to see how well you write, so make sure you spend time working on your statement in terms of the writing quality. It is a good idea to have someone (perhaps a faculty member) read your personal statement before you include it in your application. Make sure you carefully proofread your statement. Minor errors can put your application in the rejection pile.