

What are personal statements?

Personal Statements are essays that you write for most college admissions and applications and scholarship applications. They may be short essays (200-500 words) or longer essays (900 words). Generally, essays should be typed, double spaced with a font no smaller than a 10. One page is usually equal to 250 words.

Why do I need one?

Most admissions applications and scholarship applications require a personal statement or answers to short essay or long essay questions. This is your best chance to tell readers about you. Use the personal statement for either college admissions or scholarship applications to highlight your personal experiences. Statements also give reviewers a chance to see your writing skills.

When will I write one?

Most applications are due between November and February of your senior year in high school. What does a personal statement look like?

The suggested format is two pages, double spaced, typed and follows this structure:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

When writing a personal statement, use standard formatting; it is more important to demonstrate that you can say what you need to say concisely than to be exhaustive.

How do I write one?

In your writing, make sure you are answering the question posed. You should support your main ideas with the best example or anecdote. Be sure to include only relevant details and use smooth transitions to tie your essay together. The process of writing a personal statement could be broken into steps:

- Step One: READ application thoroughly and ANSWER the specific questions posed by each application. It is tempting to use the same statement for every application, but you may limit yourself this way. If a particular admissions application asks a question about something that you do not address, you will lose points!
- Step Two: Give yourself enough time to review and revise and especially to get someone else to review it for you. If you give an outside reader a very short window to read and give feedback you may not get the best results, or you may not get it back in time to use the feedback constructively.
- Step Three: Review the rough draft yourself. Give the draft to a peer and an adult (teacher, counselor, parent) to review at the same time you are reviewing your draft even if it isn't your best work. Things to keep in mind when reviewing your draft:
 - Did I answer the question?
 - Spell check
 - Check the writing tips against your writing
- Step Four: Incorporate feedback from others; make corrections.
- Step Five: Read it once more, if you have time, have someone else read it once more.

- Step Six: Finalize the draft by incorporating the last revisions.
- Step Seven: Make photocopies as well as keeping an electronic copy if possible. The last thing you want to do is start all over if your hard drive crashes, you lose your disk or your application is lost in the mail.

What do I write about?

Some applications give very open ended questions. Here are some suggestions for organizing your thoughts into a coherent essay:

- What are your goals? Why did you choose these goals?
- Why did you choose to apply to this college/for this scholarship?
- What are your values and philosophy about education? Why?
- Is there one or two accomplishment(s), either in school or outside of school that you are particularly proud of? What have you learned from these experiences?
- Do you have a time-management system? What is it?
- How do you schedule your time to include both academic and social activities?
- What difficulties or disadvantages have you faced in your life and how have you overcome them? What is one area in which you are weak and how have you or do you plan to overcome that weakness? (Keep this very brief.)
- Identify a leadership experience and talk about the most important lessons of the position and experience.
- What makes you unique?

Tips

- Speak from the heart. These personal statements are likely to be read by some administrator or adviser, not an academician or professor, so don't try to simply impress the reader with fancy verbiage or rhetoric.
- Get personal. Don't be afraid to tear at the heartstrings of your reader. Colleges nowadays are looking for people who both think and feel.
- Try to introduce new ideas in a comical way. A personal statement that makes people laugh is better than a personal statement that doesn't evoke any emotion.
- Check your work. Don't be happy with just the first draft, you should have learned better than that in high school. Find someone you feel comfortable and qualified letting revise your personal statement and give it to them.
- Colleges really do use and read these personal statements, so make sure to put some real effort into it.
- Consult with your college counselor and/or English teacher if you are having trouble

Warnings

- Make sure to use proper grammar. Nothing looks worse to an administrator than a potential student saying "Thank you for considering me into your college."
- Be careful disclosing crimes you may have committed, you are not legally protected from self incrimination through these personal statements.
- Remember that if you are trying to be funny, that sarcasm doesn't read well so try to use outright humor instead