

Personal Statement

- Purpose: to present yourself effectively and to make the connection between your interests and the program to which you are applying
 - don't depend on the reader to make this connection- do not stop with "I'm an excellent and interested person"- take the extra step: "why I would be a good fit for your program"

Personal
Statement

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- Ordinarily only 1 to 2 pages, and no two are alike
- start with broad statement, usually with H.S. or college
- Then focus on specific experiences, events, and opportunities that have sharpened your focus and interests

Personal Statements

- Use “upbeat words” and expressions
-e.g., “excellent”, “terrific opportunity”,
“very pleased to have been chosen”,
“gratified to have been selected for...”,
“surprised at how excited and
interested I was in...”

Personal Statement

- Identify current research interests (get tagged by these) and two or three faculty you might like to work with
 - natural if you have already emailed faculty
 - do not list everyone
 - check to make sure they are “core” faculty (every program has extensive affiliate faculty who would not ordinarily pick up students)

Personal Statements: Style

- Enthusiasm
- Humility
- Focus and dedication

Personal Statement: Style

- Do not stretch, modify, or enhance anything, including your level of interest in research if that is not true- recipe for disappointment-
- Do not try to sound “smart” or prove yourself- just be yourself
- Attribute flattering things about yourself to sources other than yourself, e.g., “A number of my faculty have noted the level of dedication and initiative that I have taken in my work, and I have been gratified to have been chosen to serve as the head of the research team.”

Personal Statement

- Read the statement out loud. Time it.
- Give it to friends to read (does it sound like you?).
- Give it to a faculty member to read and provide feedback on.
- Ask him/her what overall impression it leaves? “On a scale of 1 to 10, how would he/she view this statement?”- How could you improve it?