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 WORKSHOPS • CAREER COACHING • CHOOSE A MAJOR • ASSESSMENTS • RÉSUMÉS • COMPETENCIES • COVER LETTER
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Grad School Application Guide

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Make your statement distinctive by selling your image briefly and accurately, including real-life examples to back up your points. Authentic enthusiasm is a plus, writing about parts of your life or career that are interesting and relevant help grab a reader's attention. Use your personal statement to clear up any confusion or gaps in your résumé, but do not dwell on weaknesses. Avoid trying to include as much information as possible, without regard for limitations or strategic intent. Focus on being more distinctive than comprehensive.

As you begin to draft your personal statement, consider the following:

- When did you become interested in the field? What knowledge have you gained about the field that has strengthened that interest?
- Use key words to show your knowledge. Speak the language of the field.
- What are your career goals after graduate study is complete?
- What personal qualities/experiences will make your application appear unique?
- How has your involvement in college activities, part-time work, internships, or volunteer work helped prepare you for this next phase of study?
- What skills do you possess that would be most relevant to the field? (Use EXAMPLES)
- Are there any academic discrepancies on your transcript or in your application you need to address?
- Why this school and this program?
- Connect with the mission of the organization.

Tips as you write:

- Write in the active voice: Candidates who write well have an advantage in the application process because they can state their case in a concise, compelling manner.
- Be specific. Use examples to illustrate your interests, skills, etc.
- Length: Some schools are specific about how long they want your statement to be. Adhere to their guidelines. If no details are provided, aim for a 500-word essay.
- Tell an interesting story. Admissions committees read a lot of these statements...what will you write that will make them remember your story?
- Make sure your opening paragraph is an attention-grabber.
- Avoid clichés. Use this statement to show your originality.
- One size does not fit all. Tailor your statement to specific schools.
- Proofread! Review and revise your document and get others to review it as well.

THE TESTS

Most graduate and professional schools require an entrance exam, much like the ACT for college admission. Listed below are examples. MSU Computer Based Testing offers a centralized, on-campus location dedicated to administering a variety of standardized exams. *Most are offered by appointment.

GRE* | Graduate Record Examination
MAT* | Miller Analogies Test
GMAT* | Graduate Management
LSAT* | Law School Admission Test
MCAT* | Medical College Admission Test

PCAT | Pharmacy College Admission Test
PTCAS | Physical Therapy Central Application System
OTCAS | Occupational Therapy Central Application System
DAT and OAT | Dental and Optometry Admission Tests

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- A strong, compelling letter of recommendation from a faculty member, advisor, or supervisor can be a deciding factor in the admissions process. Your choices for whom to ask and when/how to ask them should be just as thoughtful as the rest of your application.
- Get to know your faculty, campus advisors, or supervisors early in your college career.
- Ask for recommendations well before the application deadline (months, not days).
- Provide them with your résumé and personal statement.



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