

# The Graduate / Professional School Application Process Demystified



## **PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

# The Basics



- **Suggested Outline**
  - Paragraph 1 – Motivation for Graduate / Professional Program
    - ✦ Consider an attention grabber / thought provoking first sentence
    - ✦ Be creative
    - ✦ Why do you want to pursue this discipline?
    - ✦ Give a clear sense of your current interests and your goals for developing them
    - ✦ Career goals can be mentioned here – this is the reason for apply in the end
  - Paragraph 2 – Academic Interests and Personal Achievements
    - ✦ This is evidence to support your claim in your opening paragraph
    - ✦ What are your pertinent academic accomplishments / skills?
    - ✦ What have you done that is relevant to this program choice?
    - ✦ Research experiences, class projects, internships, externships, etc.?
    - ✦ Have your achievements solidified your interests?
    - ✦ **How have you gone above and beyond to gain knowledge in this subject?**

# The Basics



- **Suggested Outline Continued**
  - Paragraph 3 – Important Background Experience
    - ✦ What experiences have contributed to your personality
    - ✦ Highlight experiences that have taught you something (e.g. communication skills, team leader / player, problem solving, responsibility)
    - ✦ Ideally you should demonstrate how the experience translates to your likelihood of being a successful graduate / professional student
  - Paragraph 4 – Why Should You Be Accepted
    - ✦ Why would you make an ideal graduate / professional student in XYZ Program?
    - ✦ Why is XYZ Program the ideal program for you?
    - ✦ Briefly explain any inconsistencies in your transcript, test scores, path

# The Basics



- **Suggested Outline Continued**

- **Paragraph 5 – Closing Statement**

- ✦ Briefly restate why you want to pursue this path in this program
- ✦ Restate key points (e.g. relevant experiences, accomplishments)
- ✦ End on a positive note

- **IMPORTANT TIP**

- **Use Transitions and Resolutions!**

- ✦ **Transitions** – start a paragraph with a statement that presents the theme of the paragraph AND connects it to the previous paragraph
- ✦ **Resolutions** – end a paragraph that allows you to transition to the next paragraph

THE WON'T DO THIS!  
YOU MUST TELL THEM!



**LOOK INSIDE MY SOUL  
AND SEE  
HOW BAD I WANT IT**

# Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **DO**

- Research the program, school, university
- Follow the Program Guidelines for the Personal Statement
- Self Reflect and Start Writing!
  - ✦ Why are you choosing this path?
  - ✦ What have you done to prepare for graduate school?
  - ✦ Why are you applying to THIS program?
  - ✦ Why are you a good FIT for THIS program?



# Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- Paint a picture by telling your story
- Be confident and show your passion
- Demonstrate your knowledge in the field
  - ✦ Include details of research projects, shadowing experiences, etc.
- Explain inconsistencies in your academics / path
  - ✦ Or include as an addendum (ask the admissions office what they prefer)
  - ✦ Ask your letter writers to address your inconsistencies if appropriate
- Explain your career goals and path
- **Read, revise, repeat**
  - ✦ Send to your letter writers!
  - ✦ And utilize your university Writing Center!
  - ✦ Edit over and over again!





**The Do's And Don'ts of  
Writing an  
Effective Personal Statement**



# Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **Don't**

- Write a narrative of your resume – Tell them something new
- Use the same statement for multiple applications
- Dear Diary... TMI!
- Use clichés or overuse your thesaurus
- Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
- Speak of money... unless..
- Plead and beg
- Complain – stay confident, accept responsibility for speed bumps along the way, and be positive



# Writing an Effective Personal Statement



- **The Caveats!**
  - Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
    - ✦ The topic of religion or politics is relevant to the program you are applying to.
    - ✦ State facts, not opinion
  - Speak of money... unless..
    - ✦ You are applying to an MBA or MPA program / Finance program, or similar program where the topic is relevant.
    - ✦ State facts, not opinion



# Resources



- <http://personalstatement.blogspot.com/2005/09/outline-for-personal-statement.html>
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/2/>
- <http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/a/PersonStatement.htm>
- [http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/All\\_About\\_the\\_Graduate\\_Admissions\\_Essay.htm](http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/All_About_the_Graduate_Admissions_Essay.htm)

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**Any Questions?**

