

Tips for Writing Graduate School Admission Essays / Personal Statements

1. The goal of the graduate admission essay or personal statement is to tell who you are and what makes you an outstanding candidate for admission.
2. You want to write an interesting story about yourself. The story must be truthful, lively and most of all well written. Use action verbs. What you write should have a natural flow. Remember what you learned in composition classes: transitional words and phrases are dynamic bridges between paragraphs and points.
3. Provide what is requested. Read application essay/personal statement questions and instructions carefully. Be complete and concise. Adhere to word limits.
4. Choose an angle with which you are comfortable. Consider: a major obstacle you have had to overcome; how you came to choose your field of study; career goals; impact of significant work experience; personal qualities and skills that suit you for this field; the key reasons the admissions committee should pick you over someone else. Don't include everything. Be selective. What portrays you best as a potential graduate student in this program?
5. Don't repeat information that is on your resume. Your essay should provide further insight into you as an individual.
6. Ask others for their input. Professors, employers, family members and friends may see qualities in you that you don't realize but would be an asset to someone in your desired field.
7. Your first paragraph should grab the reader and make him or her want to read more. Don't generalize. Provide specific examples throughout your essay. Avoid clichés.
8. Avoid discussion of potentially controversial subjects such as religion or politics and experiences from high school or earlier.
9. By the time you write your essay or personal statement, you should have completed enough research to know why you want to go to this school and to be able to articulate your reasons for coming to this conclusion.
10. What you think is clever or original probably isn't.
11. Explain what sets you apart from other applicants. What makes you unique? What about you would add to the diversity of the graduate program?
12. Proofread, proofread, proofread! Your statement should have no typographical, grammatical or spelling errors.