
Personal Statements



Personal statements are often called “admission essays,” “letters of intent,” or “statements of purpose.” This is your first opportunity to introduce yourself to the admissions committee.

It should be engaging to readers and demonstrate how you are unique and qualified for the program to which you are applying. The graduate school personal statement allows you to give a more complete picture of yourself than can be gleaned from your transcript and CV or resume. This document should also highlight what interests you about the program, how you will utilize the training, and what you will contribute to their program in terms of research, seminar discussions, conferences and other collaborative opportunities.

Personal Statement Tips:

Do This

- Follow instructions as far as page limits, word count, and writing to a specific prompt.
- Write about yourself and your life experiences - it is a personal statement after all.
- Make sure your experiences and stories have a purpose in being included into the statement.
- Organize your statement. It could be organized chronologically or could use recurring themes from life events, activities, or influential people.
- It is important that you can communicate clearly with people from a variety of backgrounds. The reader shouldn't have to use a dictionary to read your statement so use everyday words.
- Utilize 1.5 or double space between lines with regular 1" or .5" margins.
- Type in an easy to read font (Calibri, Times New Roman, etc.).

Don't Do This

- Submit a narrative of your resume.
- Overuse the word "I." Vary your sentence structure, especially at the beginning of your sentences.
- Use the exact same personal statement for every institution.

Personal Introduction:

Write an introduction that reflects you and your personality. It should say why you are interested in the graduate program or career field and, if appropriate, your recent experience with the job type or course topics. Starting a personal statement with sentences that show who you are can help encourage the recipient to read further.

For a job application, consider addressing what first interested you in the position's listing. Use a single, strong sentence to mention the most relevant aspects of your personality and interests in the role or company. For a university application, discuss what parts of the program or school align with your passions. Your university introduction should be a full paragraph.

Content to Include in your Statement:

Demonstrate Interest/Experiences in Your Subject:

- Internships
- Work Experience
- Shadowing Experiences
- Academic Projects
- Volunteer Experiences
- Travel Experiences

**Instead of listing all your experiences, pick and choose which experience(s) to include. Include why this experience matters and how it has impacted you.*

Address Any Red Flag Areas:

- Grades
- Test scores
- Lack of experience

Personal Traits

- Characteristics or qualities that make you stand out from your peers
- How these qualities will allow you to have success in the academic rigor of the program
- Unique upbringing
- Obstacles you have overcome
- Accomplishments or Contributions to the field

Explain Why This Particular School or Program

- Reinforce how the school's mission or coursework can prepare you for a career

Career Goals

- How does this specific degree or specific program set you up for success in your career goals?
- Does gaining this additional degree help with your career goals?
- What skills or traits do you expect to gain from earning this degree or program?

Evaluate Your Statement:

The Content

- Are you answering the actual writing question or prompt, if there is one?
- Is your essay within the word count or page limit, if there is one?
- Does your introduction paragraph grab the reader's attention?
- Will your statement help you stand out from other applicants?

The Structure

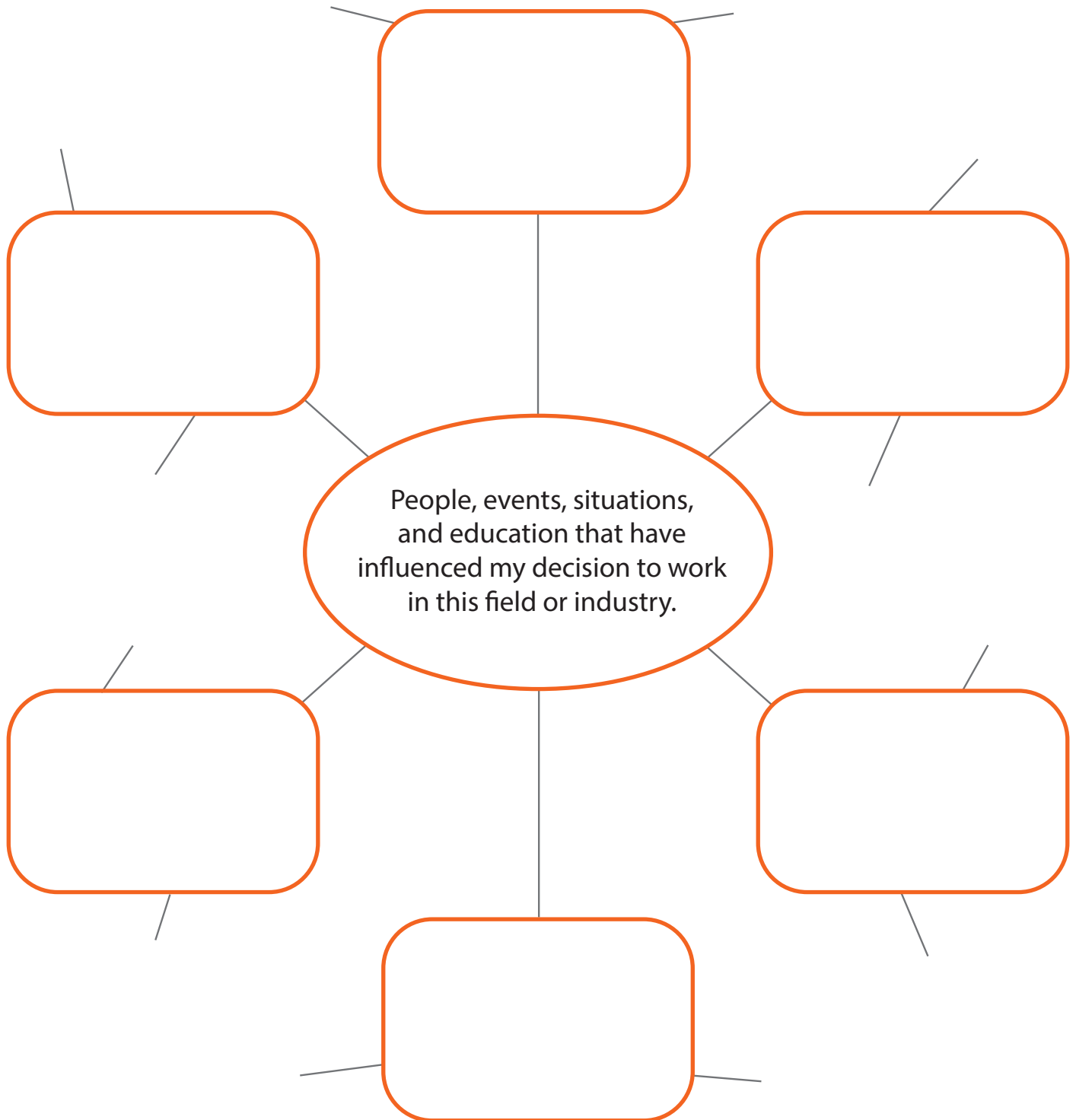
- Do your paragraphs flow smoothly with an intro, body, and conclusion?
- Have you written insightful transitions between topics?
- Are your personal stories well integrated into the statement?
- Have you varied your sentence structure and limited your use of the word "I"?

Brainstorming Activity:

Most experts recommend that you list everything that you want the reader to know about you.

- Personal qualities, impactful experiences, career goals, professional trainings, and accomplishments.

Once you have a list, organize them into groups that make sense and prioritize the most important things. Use the following mind map to help you organize your initial list.



You can now pick two or three main topics to address in your statement, depending on space. Your first paragraph is important, so spend time writing a strong and engaging introduction.