

Personal Statements Worksheet

Did you find this worksheet helpful? Check out the Career Guide for more info:
<https://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/CCPD-professional-handbook.pdf> or the Canvas Career Collection

What is a Personal Statement?

A personal statement is a type of essay used for applying to graduate school. Each school will have distinctive instructions, from specific prompts to address to specific maximum word count or character limits and types of fonts to use. Make sure you pay attention to each school's instructions and follow them closely.

What to Include in a Personal Statement?

If the institution does not provide specific instructions or prompts, include the following in your statement:

- **Why you want to go into your career field** (include specific experiences that have brought you to this point in your life. Think about part-time jobs, internships, job shadowing, or personal firsthand experiences)
- **Your short- and long-term career goals**
- **Your motivations for continuing your education** (this could be tied in with your career goals)
- **Why you're interested in their program or school specifically**

Personal statements are typically no more than 2 pages either double- or single-spaced. Double-check with your institution(s) for specific page length guidelines.

Questions to Ask Yourself Before Writing your Personal Statement:

Respond to the questions below to help you formulate your personal statement.

1. What is unique about you or your life story?
2. What details about your life might help set you apart from other applicants?
3. When/ why did you become interested in this field?
4. What have you learned about this field and how did you learn about it?

5. What have you learned during college from part-time work, clubs, classes, etc.?

6. Is there anything in your academic record that you should explain such as gaps or discrepancies?

7. What personal characteristics do you have that would improve your chances for success in the field?

8. What skills, strengths, or unique experiences do you have that would benefit a cohort of students?

9. Why specifically have you chosen to apply to an institution or program? (e.g. research or experiential opportunities, faculty members and their expertise, unique opportunities, etc.)

Tips for Writing your Personal Statement:

Use the tips below to help you create a competitive personal statement that sets you apart from other applicants.

- **Tell a story:** Demonstrate your experiences with concrete details and examples.
- **Be specific and narrow your focus:** Back up your claims with logical and specific details and avoid being too broad about your experiences.
- **Do some research about the school to which you're applying:** Find out what distinguishes your choice from other universities or programs and explain why it is your preferred choice.
- **Avoid using cliches :** Be original and showcase what makes you unique from others.
- **Proofread:** Always proofread your work for structure, content, and grammar. Read it aloud or have a friend, family member, or career counselor check your work.
- **Avoid repeating information:** Do not repeat information that can be found in your other application materials such as your resume.
- **Tailor your personal statement to the school :** Do not send a generic personal statement to every school for which you apply. Tailoring your statement can help set you apart from other applicants.