Planning for Personal Statements

Why are Personal Statements important?

- Provides the opportunity to show interest in the program
- Highlights relevant experience and strengths
- Gives the opportunity to show how you are unique and different from other applicants
- Provides the opportunity to persuade the admissions committee to be interested in YOU

**This is one aspect of the application process that you have complete control over**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Write concisely</td>
<td>✓ Be too general and not tailored</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Define career goals</td>
<td>✓ Be too wordy or disorganized</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Indicate what makes you unique</td>
<td>✓ Start every sentence with “I”</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Show how your experience is relevant</td>
<td>✓ Use clichés</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Make connection on why a fit for program</td>
<td>✓ Lie or exaggerate your experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Maintain confident and enthusiastic tone</td>
<td>✓ Have spelling/grammar mistakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Have a specific purpose when writing</td>
<td>✓ Forget to proofread repeatedly</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Tell a story and be memorable</td>
<td>✓ Repeat exactly what is on resume or CV</td>
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What are important things to consider when writing a Personal Statement?

1. **Know why you are applying to graduate school and specifically this program**
   - Why is graduate school a good fit?
   - Why are you applying to this specific program?
   - *If you aren’t clear of how to answer these, then this may not be a good fit*

2. **Know your experiences that make you unique**
   - How are you different than other applicants?
   - What background/experiences do you have that you can bring to the program?
     - *Tip*: Be specific about your experience and why you are a great candidate because there is no one else like you
     - *Tip*: Think about relevant experience: work, volunteer, classes, projects, interest, etc.

3. **Explain why you selected this particular path**
   - Was there a certain event that led you to consider this career?
   - What aspect of your experience (job, education, volunteer) made you consider this career?

4. **Explain what you want to gain from the program**
   - What does this program offer you?
   - How can this program help with your long-term goals?
5. **State how you are a value to the program**
   - What can your experiences bring to the program?
   - Why should they choose you over other candidates?

6. **Start writing**
   - Why wait to write?
   - Why write everything all at once?
     - *Tip:* Don’t feel like you have to sit down and write the paper- (jot notes in your phone, think in the shower, brainstorm with friends/family), then write a few sentences/paragraphs along the way
     - *Tip:* Tell your story and be memorable
     - *Tip:* Demonstrate your writing skills and critical thinking abilities

7. **Answer the question/prompt**
   - What is the specific question and prompt?
   - Did you answer the question presented?
   - Is the document tailored to a specific program?
     - *Tip:* Make sure you follow directions and answer the questions
     - *Tip:* Highlight why are a good fit for the program, and why the program is a good fit for you
     - *Tip:* Don’t be general, make the personal statement specific and tailored to a particular program

8. **Be concise**
   - Who wants to read a bunch of fluff?
     - *Tip:* Be detailed, but to the point

9. **Be positive and sincere**
   - Can you hear your voice throughout the document?
   - Do you sound excited and passionate about graduate school?

10. **Proofread repeatedly**
    - Have you read the paper?
    - Have you gotten others to read your paper?