



Writing Your Personal Statement

The Personal Statement, also known as a Statement of Purpose or a Letter of Intent, is a concise essay that presents what makes you unique and the attributes that qualify you for a graduate school program, a fellowship or grant competition, or a professional position. The writing should convey a narrative that will give the reader a clear picture of who you are and your story as it applies to the specifics of the program to which you are applying.

In short, the statement says:

- who you are
- what you want to do in the future as it relates to the program to which you are applying
- why the program and you are a good fit

Typically, the personal statement includes:

- relevant background
- pertinent skills, qualifications
- a sense of your overall direction

Getting Started: Brainstorm and Research

Ask yourself,

- What experiences: family life, classes, work, volunteer, or travel have influenced your career direction?
- Who have been your mentors or most influential professors?
- Think about who and what your intellectual interests have been?
- What major writers and thinkers in your field have interested you?
- Meet with professors or advisers who might help you.

There are three key pieces to writing the personal statement:

1. **Tell Your Story.** Show or demonstrate through concrete experiences and personal anecdotes who you are and what makes you unique. What skills, experiences and attributes do you have that qualify you for a particular program or opportunity? Remember the old writing adage, *Show, don't tell*. Use specific, vivid examples to illustrate your evidence. Remember, anyone can say that they are creative or diligent; you must make your audience believe through providing specific examples.
2. **The Future.** Provide a sense of your overall direction and discuss the suitability of the program for your particular interest, needs and goals. Your description of the future might include the months after graduation the following year or several years beyond.
3. **The Fit.** Demonstrate your knowledge of this particular program and why you feel the program or institution will help you connect your story to your future goals and aspirations.

Your essay should:

- start with an attention grabbing lead or hook--an anecdote, quote, question, or engaging description or scene.
- possess a clear theme, thesis or purpose.
- be clearly and succinctly written.
- use concrete and specific illustrative examples that paint a picture in the reader's mind of what distinguishes you from other applicants.
- convey what excites and interests you.

***Note:** Start early, read the prompt carefully, write multiple drafts, and show your essay to multiple pairs of eyes. The content of your essay is not the only thing being judged; your writing proficiency is also very important.

Who can help me with writing my Personal Statement?

- Work with faculty members. Your faculty advisors and mentors will be most familiar with you and your chosen field of study.
- The consultants in the Writing Center can help. Schedule an appointment online by going to: <https://clarku.mywconline.com/> or by calling the Writing Center at (508) 793-7405 (on campus x7405).
- In addition to your LEEP Advisor, there are staff members in the LEEP Center dedicated to helping you. Attend a LEEP Center sponsored Writing Your Personal Statement Workshop, or email jrobert@clarku.edu.

The Personal Statement Checklist:

- My personal statement, or letter of intent, addresses the specific questions or requirements.
- My hook, or lead, is interesting and original.
- The organization and development of the essay is logical, fluid and effective.
- My use of language and diction is precise, concise and college level.
- I have included vivid and engaging examples that illustrate my story and relative strengths and achievements.
- I have provided evidence of what makes me unique and excited to embark on further study.
- My essay depicts intellectual maturity; what matters to me, my motivations and academic inspirations, are evidenced.