

Apply to Graduate School: Tips for Success

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The Application Process

- The application
- A personal statement
- Non-refundable application fee
- Financial Aid application
- Official college transcripts
- Test scores (usually sent from the testing service)
- Letters of recommendation



Note: Many programs provide an application checklist on their website

Writing a Personal Statement



Writing Exercise

Sample Introduction #1

I have been planning a career in medicine for several years, but as an undergraduate I concentrated on getting a solid background in math and science. After graduation, I took a job to allow myself time to thoroughly think through my plans and to expose myself to a variety of work situations. This strategy has been very valuable to me in rounding out my career plans.

Sample Introduction #2

The last thing I remember is falling asleep during a late night rerun of the *Twilight Zone*. So when it happened, it was especially eerie, like I had stepped into a lost episode, but Rod Serling was nowhere in sight; for a moment, neither was anybody else. At 4:31 AM a merciless shove pushed me off my bed. I crawled on the floor, trying to escape the cruel, uncontrollable shaking, but it followed me. It followed me down the stairs and underneath the dining room table where my family joined me. Little did I realize that before the morning sun rose again, I would see everything differently.

Writing a Personal Statement

- The best way to start is to start TODAY!
- Make a writing date with a friend
- This is a document about you, your experiences and qualifications – not a research paper or your philosophy about life
- Research schools to best tailor your personal statement
- Consider the reader
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread again.

What admissions is looking for...

There is no one perfect way to write a personal statement.

Generally looking for:

- Persuasive Writing
- Self-awareness and exploration
- Real-life Examples
- Good Writing
- Entertainment
- Someone who reads the prompt instructions carefully.
- Someone who turns in application materials early or on time.

Questions to Answer...

- Why do you want to go to graduate school?
- What area do you want to specialize in?
- What have you done that has prepared you for graduate study?
- Do you have any roadblocks in your past or application?
- Who are you?

Tips from a UCSF Grad Student

- Always speak from a positive perspective
- Demonstrate skills/qualities by example
- Don't make excuses for your mistakes – show how you've learned from them
- If family/health/money/workload issues have affected your GPA, explain how you have persevered and got back on track
- Describe your research interests and how they've developed
- Describe your career goals and how your graduate degree will help you attain them
- Get feedback from friends, colleagues, professors, career counselors

Words and Phrases to Avoid without Explanation

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| significant | appealing to me | meaningful |
| interesting | appealing aspect | helping people |
| challenging | I like it | I like helping people |
| satisfying/satisfaction | it's important | remarkable |
| appreciate | I can contribute | rewarding |
| invaluable | meant a lot to me | useful |
| exciting/excited | stimulating | valuable |
| enjoyable/enjoy | incredible | helpful |
| feel good | gratifying | |
| | fascinating | |

Personal Statement Help

- Get tips on: <http://www.gradschools.com/>
- <http://www.statementofpurpose.com/>
- Get assistance from your campus Writing Center or Career Services

Contact Information

Reinhardt Hall,

Rms. 251, 252

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Letters of Recommendation

- Usually about 2-3 letters
- Can be uploaded at www.interfolio.com
- Forms can be downloaded from each of the program's websites

Tips for obtaining outstanding Letters of Recommendation

- Cultivate and keep meaningful relationships with professors and supervisors
 - Letters should refer to your specific skills, abilities, knowledge, discipline, potential, etc.
- Meet with recommenders to talk about your career/academic goals and provide them with your resume, class papers, personal statement, etc.
- ASK EARLY!
 - Ask in the summer or early in the semester when faculty is less busy.
 - Ask at *least* 3-4 weeks beforehand
 - Gives faculty ample time and saves you some stress
- Use recommenders' response as an indication of whether to include them as a recommender

Q & A

