

Career & College Readiness Lesson Plans

Telling My Story

Career Planning

Grade Level 12

Overview

Students will develop a personal statement that can be used in the college admissions process or as the basis for application to other programs that require a personal statement.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe the key components of a successful personal statement.
- Write a draft personal statement.

Language Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Verbally identify the different types of personal statements.
- Verbally articulate the aspects of a successful and unsuccessful entrance essay based on close analysis of examples.
- Tell their own story through written expression.

Standards Alignment

- California Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards:
 - W. 2, 3, 4, 5
- California Career Technical Education Anchor Standards:
 - 1, 2, 7, 11
- California Standards for Career Ready Practice:
 - 2
- National Career Development Guidelines:
 - ED1, ED2
- International Society for Technology in Education Standards:
 - 1, 2, 5

- English Language Development Standards:
 - Part I: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
 - Part II: 1-7

Materials

1. Computers with Internet access for students
2. Computer with Internet access and projection capability for instructor
3. Projector and screen
4. Handouts
 - Tips for Writing Your Personal Statement (p. 5)
 - Tips and Techniques (p. 6)
 - Personal Statement Prompts (p. 7)
5. Online Resources
 - [Tips for Writing An Effective Application Essay](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays/tips-for-writing-an-effective-application-essay-college-admissions)
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays/tips-for-writing-an-effective-application-essay-college-admissions>
 - [University of California Admissions](http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-statement/index.html)
<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-statement/index.html>
 - [The Common Application](https://appsupport.commonapp.org/link/portal/33011/33013/Article/1694/2015-16-Common-Application-Essay-Prompts)
<https://appsupport.commonapp.org/link/portal/33011/33013/Article/1694/2015-16-Common-Application-Essay-Prompts>

Activity

Students will learn the key components of a compelling personal statement, analyze examples of college entrance essays, and write their own.

Lesson Procedures

1. Introduction: Colleges generally require students to submit a personal statement or admissions essay as a part of their application packet. While not all students will be required to submit one, developing a statement can be a useful process for helping students focus on what is important to them and to have as a resource in case they want to apply to a program that does require a statement. This lesson on developing a personal statement will use the admissions requirement process to provide background information.

2. Distribute the “Tips for Writing Your Personal Statement” handout and review all the information that is provided. Ask students if they can think of another setting that might require a personal statement and if these tips might apply to other situations (such as applying for a National Service program).
3. Distribute the Tips and Techniques handout. Ask students if there are tips that seem more useful than others. Ask students if there are tips they would add to the list.
4. Go to the College Board’s Big Future Web page, “Tips for Writing an Effective Admissions Essay”, (link in Materials section), if there is time, first watch the video on the page and then have students review the tips that are provided.

Note the links to sample essays on the page. Choose to review a sample with the full class or break your class into small groups and give each group a different essay. Ask students to critique the essay then review the critique provided on the site. Then have students share out discussing the same and different elements in the essays.

5. Distribute the “Personal Statement Prompts” handout. Review all the prompts and instruct students to select one prompt to use as the basis for a draft personal statement. Remind students that their statements can be used for college admissions, application to another type of program, and/or reflecting on what they think is important in life.
6. Give students time to begin an outline and develop initial content for a personal statement. If time permits, completion of a draft could be required during the class session or students could be given the assignment of developing a statement and submitting it at a future date.

Estimated Time

One class session

Evaluation

- Every student will develop and submit a draft personal statement.

Adaptations

- Partner with a Language Arts class to give students more focused time for essay writing and review.
- Have students interview counselors about college admissions essays and/or ask for advice.
- Students could partner with a classmate and peer edit their statements.

Tips for Writing Your Personal Statement

All applicants to the University of California must respond to two prompts. You have a maximum of 1,000 words to answer both prompts and can allocate the word count as you wish as long as each response is a minimum of 250 words.

The personal statement is one of many pieces of information that is used in your application review. While it is an important piece, an admission decision is not made on the personal statement alone.

The personal statement is used to

- Gain insight into your academic, personal and extracurricular achievement.
- Obtain additional information that may not be evident in other parts of the application.
- Discover and evaluate distinctions among applicants whose academic records are often very similar.

What the UC looks for

- Initiative, motivation, leadership, persistence, service to others, special potential and substantial experience with other cultures.
- Achievement in light of the opportunities available to you.
- Any unusual circumstances or hardships you have faced and how you have responded to them. Having a hardship is no guarantee of admission. If you choose to write about difficulties you have experienced, you should describe how you overcame your challenges and what you learned or achieved in spite of these circumstances.

Academic achievement

- For freshman applicants: include academic accomplishments, beyond those shown in your transcript. Include how your academic interests developed and describe any related work or volunteer experience.

There isn't a formula or "correct answer" to the personal statement. Think about all the elements that make you who you are – school, family, and community – and tell us about them in a clear and persuasive manner. Your responses should add clarity, depth and/or context to the application as a whole. This is the time to brag. The colleges want to hear about your wonderful achievements.

Source: [Personal Statement](http://admissions.ucsd.edu/_files/personal-statement.pdf) [PDF], Undergraduate Admissions, University of California, San Jose. The URL is http://admissions.ucsd.edu/_files/personal-statement.pdf.

Tips and Techniques

DO

- **Start early.** Allow sufficient time for preparation, revisions and careful composition.
- **Think carefully about your responses.** Look critically at the information in your application: your grades, awards, activities and work experience, family and income. Anticipate questions an admissions evaluator will have after reading your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to answer those questions.
- **Write clearly.** Present information and ideas in a focused, deliberate and meaningful manner. Use concrete examples and details to support your point. A list of qualities is not persuasive.
- **Proofread.** You will not be graded on grammar, spelling or sentence structure, but ensuring accuracy and flow will enhance overall presentation and readability.
- **Get feedback.** Your personal statement should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone, but others – family, teachers and friends – may offer valuable suggestions.
- **Use a word-processing program.** Once you are satisfied with your statements, copy and paste them into the space provided in the application. Proofread once more for odd characters or line breaks that may have appeared.
- **Use “I” statements.** Talk about yourself so that we can get to know your personality, talents, accomplishments and potential for success.

DON'T

- **Plagiarize.** Ask advice of whomever you like, but do not use ideas or content from print or online sources. Use your own ideas and words.
- **Use creative writing.** Avoid clichés, poems, scene-setting, quotes or jokes.
- **Write about events in the distant past.** Unless they clearly illustrate your plans for your college career, your passion or future goals.
- **Write about other people more than yourself.** It's great to have family support or a loving friend or role model, but the personal statement should be about you.
- **Duplicate information found elsewhere in your application;** instead add to the UC College understanding of you as an individual.
- **Give a long list of accomplishments and activities.** Place them in context with explanations or examples. Thoughtfully describe what you've done, the choices you've made and what you've gained as a result.
- **Pose philosophical questions.** Get to the point and tell the UC College what you mean.
- **Use acronyms.** If the college doesn't know what they are your meaning may be lost.

Source: [Personal Statement](http://admissions.ucsd.edu/_files/personal-statement.pdf) [PDF], Undergraduate Admissions, University of California, San Jose. The URL is http://admissions.ucsd.edu/_files/personal-statement.pdf.

Personal Statement Prompts

University of California 2015-16 Freshman Personal Statement Prompts

- Describe the world you come from—for example, your family, community or school—and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Source: [University of California Admissions](http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-statement/index.html)

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-statement/index.html>.

Common Application 2015-16 Essay Prompts

- Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, and an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Source: [Common Application](https://appsupport.commonapp.org/link/portal/33011/33013/Article/1694/2015-16-Common-Application-Essay-Prompts)

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