

Statement of Purpose Guidelines

A statement of purpose is essentially your opportunity to introduce yourself to a university's admission committee. It should demonstrate your personality and intellect while briefly describing your academic background and your interest in pursuing a graduate degree. A statement of purpose varies from program to program; therefore, understanding the requirements and instructions provided by the program is highly important. This handout will provide guidelines to get you started in a well written statement of purpose and will to give you a general idea of organizing a well-structured letter.

Organizational Checklist:

- Grab the reader with a “hook” (opening statement) that will showcase your passion for the field
- Transition to your background within your field and describe your academic background in your particular field
 - Include specific classes
 - Well-known or specific professors you have had
- Extracurricular activities in your field
- Publications or professional accomplishments you upheld
- Explanation of why you have decided to enter your particular graduate program and institution
 - Mention professors within the program that you know of and appreciate their work
 - Include certain features of the program that attract you
 - What makes you unique? Why should you be selected?
 - How will acceptance to this program help you with future career goals?

Additional tips:

- Know your audience before you start writing. Because of the high volume of applications, setting yourself apart from other applicants is essential
- Be concise and direct
- Get advice from your professors for your writing
- Proofread! And edit plenty and PLENTY of times before submitting
- Visit the Career Center for a Statement of Purpose review



Questions to Get You Started

Providing detailed answers to these questions, and using personal examples, will help you pinpoint the most interesting aspects of yourself for inclusion in your personal statement.

1. What unique characteristic, accomplishment, or experience sets you apart from other candidates? If a graduate committee were to take away only one thing from reading your letter, what would you want it to be?
2. When and how did you first become interested in your field of study? What have you learned about the field and about yourself as a result of your interest?
3. What specific interests do you have within your field of study?
4. Have you had to overcome any unusual hardships or obstacles in your life? If so, can you use your success to demonstrate your ability to learn from hardship or other qualities that will make you a more impressive candidate?
5. Are there any discrepancies in your academic record that require some sort of explanation?
6. Why are you applying to this program as opposed to any other? Demonstrate your interest and how you plan to use your degree?
7. Describe any experiences that have prepared you for this graduate program.
8. What do you consider your strengths to be? Provide detailed examples for each.
9. Why should the committee choose you? What do you possess that makes you the strongest candidate? What do you have to offer?

