



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Writing Skills Improvement Program

Tips for Writing Personal Statements

A personal statement is a short, persuasive essay required in applications for higher education (college admission, internships, scholarships). In this narrative, you highlight why you are the right candidate for the program you are applying to. The structure of this essay is similar to other essays you have written, with an introduction that hooks the readers with a compelling story that leads to your goals, body paragraphs that present and explain your experiences, and a conclusion that sums up your goals and looks at your future goals.

Common Challenges: Sometimes it is hard to talk about yourself and show off all that you have done! If you think you do not have a story to share, consider this to get started:

1. Think of a significant moment, conversation, or event you have experienced (e.g., a class you took that sparked your interest in a specific field, a memorable summer experience where you learned to put into practice some skills, something you are very proud of, a challenge that you faced and were able to overcome, someone who help you the most during moments of hardships, etc.). Since you are the main protagonist, use the “I” pronoun. Consider: What is the main theme and key experiences and/or personal qualities you will discuss?
2. Once you have identified a significant experience, jot down your key ideas about how those moments relate to who you are now. To organize your thoughts, create a mind map to visualize your story.
3. Think about 3-5 key strengths of your experiences that you will develop with examples. Remember that the goal of this essay is to tell the readers who you are and why you are the best candidate for the position you are applying for. Your strengths need to align with the purpose of the essay.
4. As you have gathered some information, start drafting. The structure of a personal statement is like that of a traditional academic essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion. Your job is to make claims and provide examples that will allow the readers to get to know you and persuade them that you are the best candidate for the program. Unlike in most traditional academic essays, however, you can be more descriptive to bring the reader into your experience through concrete details. The chart below identifies the main parts you should include.

