

The Personal Statement

YOUR GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED

The personal statement is your chance to provide the admissions committee with subjective information about your preparation, qualifications, and your reasons for choosing a particular program and career. For **graduate programs**, you may be asked to include research interests and/or faculty who you would be interested in conducting research with. For **professional schools**, they typically are interested in how you have experience and skills in working with patients/clients in a clinical setting as well as knowledge of the profession.

1 Before you start writing your statement, read the directions from the program(s) carefully to ensure you address their specific questions.

2 If there are no specific questions, begin by brainstorming answers to these questions:

- Why do you want to go to graduate or professional school?
- What are your relevant experiences (i.e. research, clinical, volunteer, or jobs)?
- When did you become interested in the field and what have you done and learned that has solidified this is what you want to pursue (classes, shadowing, research, work)?
- What are your short and long-term career goals?
- What skills, strengths, and qualities do you possess and how do they relate to your career plans?
- How do your unique background, experience, and/or identities add to the program or profession?

sometimes referred to as:

"Personal Essay",
"Statement of Purpose,"
or "Statement of Academic Goals"



FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

- What area(s) of study are you interested in and why?
- Think about how your interests may relate to any specific features of the program or school.
- Who are the faculty with whom you want to work and why do their research areas interest you?
- If you visited a school and program, mention whom you met with and when.
- What are your short/long-term career goals? To teach? Do research? Work in academia? Work in private industry?

FOR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

- What are the skills and qualities desired by the profession? How can you demonstrate you have these skills or qualities? Be specific and give examples.
- Why do you want to be a doctor, physical therapist, pharmacist, etc.?

3 Develop a draft based on your answers to the questions above.

careerdevelopment@alma.edu | www.alma.edu/career



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Additional tips

RESOURCES

On Campus Support

Have your statement reviewed throughout the draft process by Career and Personal Development staff, faculty members, and/or the Writing Center.

Use **Handshake** (alma.joinhandshake.com) to schedule a 1:1 appointment with Career and Personal Development staff.

Purdue OWL

Visit this online resource for more tips, tricks, and questions to think about when drafting your statement. [Link](http://owl.purdue.edu) (owl.purdue.edu)

Program Websites

Carefully review the website for any school/program you intend to apply to for their guidelines and requirements. Some programs require additional essays such as diversity statements - be sure to read through the application steps carefully!

Be yourself and tell *your* story rather than trying to be the “ideal applicant.”

Discuss the meaning and value of your experiences when describing them. Explain what you learned about yourself, your field, your goals, and your future career choice from your experiences.

Avoid providing just a chronological list of your accomplishments or saying generic statements such as “I want to be a doctor because I want to help people ...”

Keep the content general when using Centralized Application Service (CAS) portals because your statement will go to all schools you apply to.

Check the application instructions to ensure you answered any required questions.

Confirm required character, word, and/or page limits.

Double-check spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting.

Timeline tip!

It's recommended that you start your personal statement draft six months prior to when you want to submit it with your application(s).