

Personal Statements

Before You Write

- Read each question or prompt carefully.
- Make every effort to understand and address what the admissions committee is seeking from your statement.
- Think about what sets you apart from other applicants. Be creative and be yourself.
- Be engaging, insightful, unique, and open in your statement. Express that you have successfully gone through a process of careful reflection and self-examination. Prove your motivation for the profession.
- Think about why you are applying to this particular school/program. Include a paragraph to showcase that you are a good fit for the school and program to which you are applying.

Personal Statements

There are two main categories to consider when writing your personal statement. Pay close attention to what the application calls for and structure your statement accordingly.

General, Comprehensive

- This type of personal statement allows for a lot of freedom regarding content and what you are able to write.
- Most often prepared for standard law or medical school application forms.

Specific Prompt/ Question

- This type of statement should address or respond to the specific question being asked.
- Most often prepared for business and graduate school applications. Some business school applications request multiple essays, typically asking three or more questions.
- Adhere to the indicated length and/ or word count limit.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What's special, unique, distinctive, or impressive about you or your life story? What details of your life might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you originally become interested in this field and what have you since learned about it—and yourself—that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work, shadowing, volunteering, internships or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- Try to quantify the number of hours that you have been involved in community service or volunteering.
- If work experiences have consumed significant periods of time during your college years, what have you learned, and how has the work contributed to your personal growth?
- What are your career goals? How have your experiences (i.e., work, internships, volunteer) solidified your decision to become a physical therapist, lawyer, physician, etc.?
- Are there any gaps, discrepancies or “dips” in your GPA in your academic record that you should explain?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or adversity? If you can link this to your career goals, perhaps it could be woven into your statement.
- What personal characteristics do you possess that would enhance your prospects for success in the field or professions? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate than others?
- What are the most compelling reasons for the admissions committee to be interested in you?



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Additional Resources

Office of Career Services

Riverside 116
813.253.6236
ut.edu/career/appointment

Saunders Writing Center

Plant Hall 323
813.253.6244
ut.edu/academic-support/saunders/

Pre-Professional Specialist (Pre-Health & Pre-Law)

Jackie Mikulski
Academic Success Center
North Walker Hall
jmikulski@ut.edu

Department Faculty

Have your department chair or faculty member review your personal statement. They are a great resource for you as you prepare your statement for submission.

Tips for Writing

- **Tell a story:** Do not fictionalize or lie, but think of your own life and experiences as a type of story. Be fresh, lively, different—and articulate. Why? By distinguishing yourself through this story, you'll make yourself *memorable*. This makes you stand out above the rest. Much of what is submitted to the committees lack uniqueness and are forgettable. Try to make your story *catchy*. It never hurts if the story you tell has drama. Find an angle: If your story lacks any significant drama, think of a *hook*, an offbeat and memorable introduction to your story. Try to begin in a nontraditional way or an unexpected way.
- **Concentrate on your opening paragraph:** The lead, or opening paragraph, is the most important. *One of the worst things you can do with your personal statement is to bore the admissions committee, yet that is exactly what most applicants do.* Consider the number of statements being read. Don't be forgettable.
- **Tell who you are:** After the first paragraph or two, you will want to elaborate further or add distinguishing information relating to your background and experiences. Later you might want to detail some of your interest in or exposure to your particular field. Show your need for helping others by including your vision impact on your community (key for law/medical school). *Remember, what's most important about your personal statement is what you say and how you say it! Be selective about what you tell the admissions committee.*
- **Review your personal history:** Facts (experiences, events, achievements) are extremely relevant. *Review your life carefully* for facts that reveal an unusual dimension and relate to your professional goals or suitability for a certain career.
- **Use jargon, the specialized language of your discipline or profession, effectively:** Indicate your familiarity with the vocabulary of your intended field but avoid inflating your style such that you sound pretentious. Define terms and spell out acronyms that would be unfamiliar to your audience.
- **Determine the research interests of faculty members** in the department for which you are applying and tailor your statement as applicable.
- **What not to include:** Avoid references to high school experiences and accomplishments (unless the achievement is particularly extraordinary and impacted your development). Don't mention subjects that are potentially controversial (such as religion and politics).