

Personal Statement Checklist

A personal statement serves as an opportunity to explain to an admissions council how you are uniquely qualified for a graduate program, scholarship, or other opportunity. It should paint a picture of you as a person while highlighting your interest in the program, your short and long-term career goals, and examples of your motivation and competence. A quality personal statement requires carefully reflecting on life events, work experiences, achievements, motivation, and academic history. Below is a checklist to utilize when evaluating your document.

My personal statement:

- Meets page or word limits using conventional fonts, spacing, and margins.
- Is free of grammatical and spelling errors (Consult with The Writing Center for additional assistance: <https://wrd.as.uky.edu/writing-center>).
- Features an engaging opening paragraph that avoids clichés and sets a framework for the rest of the document.
- Has an overall interesting and positive tone utilizing active voice.
- Distinguishes yourself from other candidates and discusses what makes you different and uniquely qualified.
- Does not simply repeat your resume (think depth over breadth).
- Offers evidence of positive qualities and traits you possess through specific examples (consider what skills you have that improve your chance of success and how you have demonstrated them).
- Communicates both short-term and long-term career goals.
- Connects life experiences to academic motivation and career goals.
- Explains why you are interested in the specific school and program.
- Includes only appropriate and relevant material.
- Avoids using “I” at the beginning of each sentence and varies sentence structure.
- Is an accurate and honest depiction of yourself.

Extra points to consider:

- Mention faculty with whom you would like to collaborate and why.
- Have professors, industry professionals, and other individuals you trust read your personal statement and offer feedback for improvement.
- Comment on circumstances that may have prompted low grades or gaps in academic records, with an emphasis on learning from events and having a positive future focus.
- Graduate programs may vary in personal statement prompts or questions they would like you to answer; be sure to follow directions and tailor your essays to each program’s requirements.