

# Tips on Writing a Personal Statement or Admissions Essays

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# Why a Personal Statement?

- Only chance you have to talk to the Admissions Committee.
- Goal: clear, concise, and persuasive
  - academic or research interests
  - reasons for wanting to pursue graduate study
  - reasons for choosing a certain institution
  - career goals
  - Personal background/extracurricular activities

# 3 Questions to Answer

- Every university asks a different question – but it all leads to the same answers:
  1. Who are you?
  2. Why do you want to study here?
  3. Why should we (the university) want you to study here?
- Answer the questions directly for each university. Don't try to recycle your essays....

# Basic Essay Structure (1000 words)

## 1. Introduction

- concrete event
- Connect real world to research/study
- >100 words

# Basic Essay Structure

## 2. Academic history

- how you got interested in your subject
- how you are pursuing that subject now
- >400 words

# Basic Essay Structure

## 3. The program

- Why this program? This university?
- Know the program! It will show.
- >200 words

# Basic Essay Structure

## 4. The future

- what you want to do in the future
- why this is important to you
- >200 words

# Basic Essay Structure

## 5. Conclusion

- Tie everything back together with your opening paragraph
- >100 words



# What Are They Looking For?

## **Complete picture of the student:**

- Motivation, focus, goals
- Academic ability
- Communication skills: reading, writing, speaking
- Potential for success
- Personal qualities: readiness for graduate study, self-discipline, work habits, teamwork, independent study, commitment, originality of ideas, maturity, adaptability, initiative

# Online Resources

- **Yale University** – advice to students:  
<http://www.yale.edu/yalecol/academics/fellowships/application/essays.html>
- **Boston University** – sample essays:  
<http://www.bu.edu/bufellow/successf.htm>
- **Personal Statements online:** <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementsonline/node/1984>

# Contact

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