**The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

As a student in the IB program, I have always thought that this path would be the best direction for me. Since the beginning, I was still hesitant about which major I would yearn to pursue. I, at present right now, am regretting that decision. Not the decision as in putting up with the IB program but selecting the six subjects. I was heavily stuck on two majors, Business and Arts. Business, primarily because I have wanted to create a business of my own, seeing a piece of land that has the potential of turning into the ground of an alluring residence. As for Arts, I have always had a passion for drawing since I was younger. As well as noticing the beautiful landscapes that artists have created, the emotions and the experiences that they have been through were shown on a canvas. Moreover, this setback has pushed me to finally settle to take on Business as my future career. No reasons specifically but you know when you got that momentary feeling at the most unexpected time.

In view of the fact that I didn’t decide earlier before the subject selection, I still have to endure IB Visual Arts. This has affected my mentality as well as my well-being. What I learned so far about Visual Arts is that it contains such subjectivity and its students must hold strong confidence to perform outstandingly. Not only looking at the adverse aspects but looking in a positive direction, this subject has taught me more about myself. We were told to brainstorm ideas and this shaped my creativity skills. We were told to do mandatory presentations on our multiple works and this has improved my confidence. This subject may not hold or influence any position in my Business major application but it has taught me as a person. I was a person with 1% of confidence and a nervousness of public speaking. The reason for this was what if I made a mistake and everyone would start judging me? I wouldn’t have any time to think of a defense. However, a realization hit me during one of the classes. “You can only learn through failures.” This phrase is proof that I am getting there. As well as a strong confidence boost for me.

Hi Michelle,

You’ve chosen a highly popular prompt - one that is relevant to most applicants. Everyone has probably dealt with difficult challenges or failures during their lives, so demonstrating your perspective on the world and how you handle obstacles is the key aspect when crafting your personal statement. However, it is advisable to avoid discussing common instances such as receiving a low grade in class, as it is overly common and do not offer admissions officers a genuine glimpse into your distinct viewpoint.

Colleges seek to observe your maturity, resilience, and thoughtfulness; your story should demonstrate how you confronted an obstacle, but instead of giving up, you responded with a creative and dignified solution. It is essential to be vulnerable in your personal statement, openly showcasing your insecurities, regrets, and fears. Additionally, as the prompt suggests, elucidate what you learned from the experience and how it has had a lasting impact. If you struggle to identify such an impact, it might be best to choose a different topic for your personal statement. Remember, your personal statement is like your interview – ensure that you are sharing a significant and meaningful story.

I highly suggest following this outline: context, obstacle, reaction, result.

1. In the intro, ensure that you provide sufficient background information and context for better understanding.

For instance, in your essay, you wrote briefly about overcoming your fear of public speaking in the IB Visual arts class. This personal growth would have held more significance if you described your initial fear. It is crucial to provide the admissions committee with ample detail to comprehend your personal growth and transformation throughout the narrative. If you were initially a shy person/had trouble communicating, it is important to note your pre-state.

It is also helpful to list down why you think that overcoming your fear of public is essential. Why do you want to overcome this particular trait? Is there anyone who motivated you? What is your future aspiration that is related to this obstacle?

## **Clearly define the obstacle**

This is the part that is missing in your story. As a reader, I am not sure what your particular struggle/failure/challenge is. Focus on one significant challenge in your life. If you want to focus on the public speaking one, show us how your inability to speak in public has impeded your chances at doing important things. Show the committee how you plan to overcome your fear. List the efforts you took, which allows the reader a fuller understanding of the lengths you’re willing to take to grow.

## Show your reaction in depth: this is the most important part! Universities are interested in gaining insight into your thought processes and how you navigate challenging circumstances. Make sure that you answer these questions:

## In what manner did you overcome the obstacle? It is crucial to articulate your emotional reaction (hurt, motivation, sadness, anger, surprise, or any other emotion.)

## How did you manage and address these emotions?

## Did your response demonstrate maturity?

## What was your initial emotional response? How did your thoughts and feelings evolve as time passed?

## Lastly, what strategy or plan did you formulate in response?

## Discuss the level of success you achieved through your efforts. Even if you did not fully achieve your initial objective, what valuable lessons did you learn? Moreover, highlight how you are currently implementing these insights in your life or future goals.

If you have overcome your fear of public speaking, how has it impacted your life? For instance, you can write about how after becoming more courageous, you’ve made more friends/held leadership roles/joined more activities, and so on. Universities want to see your optimistic and proactive mindset when facing challenges.

Good luck, Michelle! I truly hope that by writing your personal statement, you can also learn more about yourself and what you desire by attending your dream university ☺

Best,

Melinda