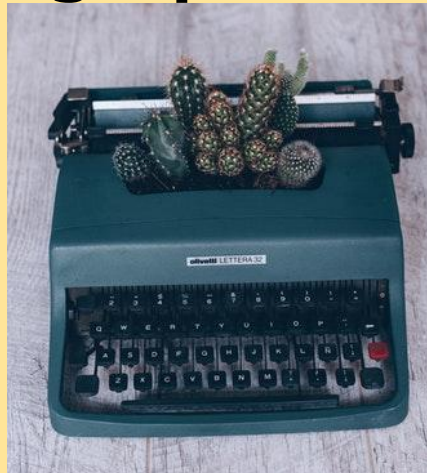


Graduate School Personal Statement: Paragraphs 3-5



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UROC- GRAD 496A
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Personal Statement in 5 Paragraphs Overview

1. **Introduction:** your unique personal story, communicates distance traveled
2. **Your relevant experience:** What evidence (research/teaching/practical experience) demonstrates that you are ready for graduate school?
3. **Your research interests:** What topics do you want to study in graduate school?
4. **Program and Faculty Match:** Who do you want to work with? Why this program?
5. **Conclusion:** What are your future professional and academic goals?

Today's Learning Goals

1. Paragraph 3 - Research Interests
 2. Paragraph 4 - Faculty Mentor and Program Fit & Match
 3. Paragraph 5 - Conclusion: Future Academic & Professional Goals
 4. General Writing Tips
-

Question Slide

- Why is fit and match so important???
- Why do admission committees want to know your long-term career goals?

3. Research Interests



What are your research interests?

What do you want to study in graduate school?

- Your research interests: current or future

List topics and areas of interest

- Mention that you are flexible to exploring other areas/topics during your graduate studies, if you are still uncertain of your current topics

Don Asher Sample Discourse

I am particularly interested in ____, ____, ____, as well as deepening my understanding of ____ and ____ in general. *(Moving from the specific to the general, must match with what they do in the program. Need to show that you have flexibility)*. Of course, I realize my interests will progress and evolve as I pursue my graduate classes, but these are the topics that are most fascinating to me at this time.

Sample – Research Interests

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4. Faculty Mentor and Program Fit & Match



Why is fit and match so important?

- The prestige of the university does not matter as much in graduate school
 - At the Ph.D. level you are applying to faculty more so than the university itself
 - Programs are also making an investment in you since graduate school is an apprenticeship
 - A good fit and match benefits everyone
-

Faculty Mentor: Who do you want to work with?

- List 3-4 potential faculty mentors with similar interests or areas of expertise. Why??
- Demonstrate that you are familiar with each faculty mentor's work
- Make clear concise connections between your work and theirs

Program Fit & Match:

Why this program?

- Demonstrate that you have done your research on the program and what it offers
- Mention unique facts about the program that align with your professionalization goals (e.g. lab name, community programs that provide practical experience for grad students, archives, etc.)

Fit and match

- **MA/MS/MFA:** Why do you like this program?
- **PhD:** Who do you want to work with, why?
- **MD:** Why medicine?
- **JD:** Why this law program?

Sample – Faculty Mentor and Program Fit & Match

- Provide faculty match example here. Choose one from Models provided.

5. Conclusion: Future Academic / Professional Goals



Conclusion – Brainstorming about your future

Reflect on your theme.

Emphasize your strengths, past experiences, intended contributions, and future goals.

Don Asher's "the big finish" framework.

"Upon completing this program, I intend to..."

This is all about your future, so you are to predict your own success.

Sample Future Goals

How do we talk about success in academia?

- Publications
- Grants & Funding
- Mentorship
- Labs
- Academic or industry positions

What positions are generally talked about?

- "Secure a tenure track position at a doctoral granting, research intensive institution."
- "Return to my hometown/state/land and assist with...."
- "Establish my own laboratory and...."
- "Secure a position with the U.S. Department of"
- "Mentor students as I have been mentored."

Sample – Conclusion

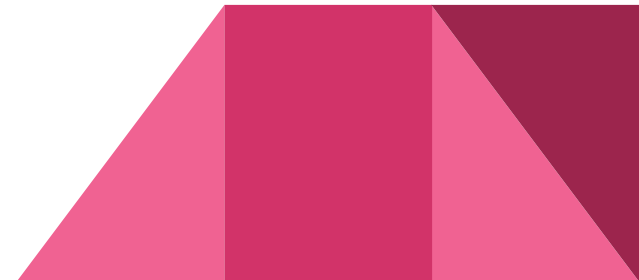
- Provide conclusion example here. Choose one from Models provided.

Writing Tips



General Reminders

- Follow directions related to page count or word limits
- Use the Font that is requested
- Be concise
- Follow all directions given



Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

Speaker
Ethos

The creator of the message positions him/herself as one who has the knowledge, is fair in its presentation, and is believable.

Context

Context

Purpose

What is your aim or goal for creating this message?

This is the actual message the speaker is giving. Is the message logical? Is it presented with factual, credible information? Is the message clear and specific, organized in a logical well-reasoned order?

Who are you addressing? What are their concerns, values, beliefs? How can you appeal to their emotions and imagination? How can you move the audience to care about your message?

Message
Logos

Audience
Pathos

The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

Context

Personal Statement Rhetorical Situation

Context: graduate application (prompt, word/page limits)

Audience: admissions committee (current professors and sometimes ABD graduate students); your writing instructors and peers

Purpose: to persuade faculty to grant you admission into their graduate program

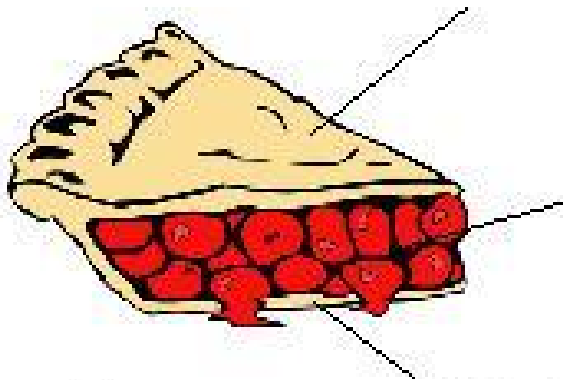
Speaker Ethos: your credibility and expertise. What examples are you using to prove your point?. Word choices, syntax, tone.

Message Logos: organization of ideas within paragraphs and throughout essay.

Audience Pathos: what emotional appeals connect your message to your audience

Paragraph Structure: **P.I.E.+Transition**

Point – tell me what your paragraph is about



Information – give me evidence from your text supporting your point

– Quote

- Summary

– Paraphrase

Explanation – explain how your information supports your point


– **Should be longer than your Information**

Transition (word/phrase) – cue readers to the next idea/paragraph

Sample P.I.E.+T. Paragraph

PhD, Chemical Engineering- *Relevant Experience*

In the summer of 2011, I was selected to participate in the prestigious **Ronald E. McNair Achievement Program at UA and was given an opportunity to work one-on-one with Dr. P. Blowers on a new research project.** The goal of this project was to identify an ideal refrigerant that would minimize greenhouse gas emissions, directly and indirectly, for running window air conditioners in the U.S. **Throughout the summer, I developed a complex theoretical model in Excel that incorporated Visual Basic Programming (VBA) to perform a thermodynamic analysis of the vapor compression refrigeration cycle used in refrigeration equipment.** **This project required efficient research skills for compiling an extensive literature review and truly tested my scientific writing skills as I gathered information on past refrigerants as well as current and future ones.** Chemical engineering principles were used for calculations on seven refrigerants, and in the end, a sensitivity analysis was performed on the initial assumptions made in the study. **This experience provided me with more insight into my research interests in chemical engineering and its research methods to examine vapor compression.**



Final Writing Tips

- Avoid clichés
- Be specific and not vague
- Provide descriptive details, yet be concise
- Be honest!
- Draft and revise multiple times
- Share with current faculty mentors, UROC peers, and writing instructors
- Balance feedback from various parties since it might change your authenticity

Pre-writing exercise: 7 minutes

Create a list of 3-5 bullet points that address each question.

- What do I want to study and learn in graduate school?
- What program do I want to apply to? Why?
- And which faculty would be an ideal mentor? Why?
- What do I want to do after graduate school? What does a Master's or PhD do to help me reach my professional/academic goals?

External Resources

List of Strong Action Verbs

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1393/2018/01/Action-Verbs-for-Resumes.doc.pdf>

Purdue OWL's Advice from Admissions Officers

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/preparing_an_application/writing_the_personal_statement/advice_from_admissions_officers.html

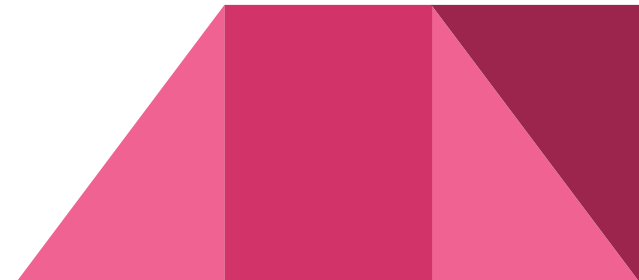
Purdue OWL's Writing the Personal Statement

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/preparing_an_application/writing_the_personal_statement/index.html

SmartWords.Org's Transition Words <https://www.smart-words.org/linking-words/transition-words.html>

Yale College Writing Center “Writing Personal Statements for Graduate School”

http://ctl.yale.edu/sites/default/files/basic-page-supplementary-materials-files/writing_personal_statements_for_graduate_school.pdf



Questions?

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