**five of the most common mistakes students make when writing their dietetic internship personal statements** in hopes that they will help you to write your most rockstar statement possible!

**1. You don’t do your homework.**

Before you even sit down to start writing your statement, you MUST do some serious homework about each program you apply to.

Go through every single page of the website, Google everything you can, reach out to current and past interns, and contact the director. **Please, if there’s only one thing you do, contact the director (unless they specifically ask that you do not on their website).**

Ask questions, inquire about open houses, and see if you can get some face time. But please, dear lord, **don’t ask obvious questions that are on the website**.

You know you want this program, so **why would you not want to know every. single. detail. about it before you apply**? I’m continually shocked by students who claim they want an internship and then ask questions like, “So when is the application due?”

Consider it *your job* to know as much as you can before you even do the work of applying. I reached out to everyone I could about the program I applied to because I needed to know as much as possible to put my best application forward.

**Does the program have special application instructions?** Do they want you to answer specific questions in your statement? Do they have a word maximum?

The standard [DICAS](https://portal.dicas.org/) word count is 1000 words or 8000 characters, whichever is most. But if a program specifically says to only write 1000 words then you would be blatantly not following directions by writing 8000 characters and could be overlooked for that reason. Don’t rely on DICAS, read the program’s website.

Also, it’s super important to know the ins and out of what the program is all about so you can show the director how you are a perfect fit. **Knowing the program’s mission and goals will help you to define your purpose for applying.**

**Having as much information as possible can only be a good thing, and here’s the perfect example of why:**

I searched everything I could find, asked professors, contacted current interns, attended the open house, and met with the director in person. The day after I pushed submit on the application I went into the restaurant I was working at during undergrad and *the director was there eating dinner with her husband!*

I was shocked and nervous–and definitely didn’t want to interrupt her dinner–but as she was leaving I reintroduced myself and said hello and she said she saw my face and remembered I had come to see her. I told her I had just applied and hoped to speak with her soon.

Three weeks later I was invited for an interview, and the rest is history. **You just never know!**

**2. You bounce around with no theme or direction.**

Like any other piece of writing, **your personal statement should have a clear theme and direction.**

Deciding upon your direction or end goal before beginning will allow you to make writing decisions that will reflect your theme, making each word and sentence cohesive. Your theme should convey who you are and what you will bring to the internship in one sentence.

***Deciding upon your direction or end goal before beginning will allow you to make writing decisions that will reflect your theme, making each word and sentence cohesive.***

Let’s say that you are a hardworking, slightly older student with a lot of volunteer experience and lots of passion for food, travel, and global health (hmmm, wonder who that could be?).

Your theme may be, “I am an accomplished, well-rounded applicant that will bring energy, enthusiasm, and maturity to the program.”

Boom. You have a theme.

The sentence doesn’t even need to make an appearance in your statement, it’s just a tool to guide you when writing. Every paragraph you write should consist of examples of why this statement is true.

***Don’t just tell directors what you’ve done, tell them who you are and use what you’ve done to back it up.***

For me, I knew I was coming into the application process with a lot of experience so it was hard to nail down exactly what I wanted to focus on. Clinical volunteering? Serving meals at a food bank? Being a part of the student dietetic association? My love of travel and foods from around the world?

These are all great potential themes, but**how to narrow it down?**

*I decided I didn’t need to.* My theme would be flexibility and maturity. I was a returning student who had been in the workforce for a few years before going back to school; this showed maturity. I had an array of volunteer and work experiences to draw upon; this showed flexibility.

I decided to choose these two descriptive words and some of my strengths (communication, etc) to begin my paragraphs and then backed up each statement with examples from my past experiences.

**Don’t just tell directors what you’ve done** by restating the what’s already on your resume, **tell them who you are and use what you’ve done to back it up.**

Which leads us to…

**3. You only focus on what you’ve done and not what you will do.**

**Your personal statement is exactly that, a statement.** You are stating who you are, what you’ve done, and–most importantly–what you will do.

Most so-so personal statements that I’ve read (and even written!) have focused solely on why the writer wants to get into the program and what they’ve done to show for it.

These are essential parts of a good statement, but internship directors can get a full description of what you’ve done easily by looking at your resume and activities section on DICAS.

What these mediocre statements are missing is a **fully realized description of your goals and how this particular program will help you achieve them.**

Now I know that as a student you may not know exactly what you want to do. Hell, I don’t even know exactly what I want to do now and I’m two years into being a RD!

But internship **directors want to know that you have clear goals and why being an intern in their program is going to place you closer to reaching them.**

What is it about the program that caught your eye and how does it align with your particular interests? For me, I knew my top choice was the internship I wanted because it would allow me to work with patients with mental illness and I have an interest (and goal!) of working with under served populations.

In my essay I stated my interest in working in mental health, used examples of past experiences with psychiatric patients, and **explained how the program would allow me to further explore my interest and prepare me to reach my goals.**

**Try this with every paragraph:**

1. Open with a statement about an interest or characteristic about yourself.
2. Use 2-3 sentences explaining what you’ve done using specific past experiences like volunteering, a special project, or an event.
3. Then close with a sentence stating **how the program will help you build upon these things to further yourself and/or your goal in this area.**

**4. You don’t proofread or get feedback.**

I’m an ok writer, I know it. In fact–I’ll be confident–at times I’m pretty damn good. But that doesn’t mean that I’m too good for a proofreader.

In fact, **there is no one that couldn’t benefit from a second (or third, or fourth) set of eyes on the personal statement** that may help them get matched to the program the really want.

When you’ve been staring at your own writing for hours, days, and weeks you’re bound to miss something. I’ve read this article three times and I’m sure there are still typos. It’s inevitable.

***Pro tip: Take a break, walk away, and then come back and read your statement out loud. You will see-and say-your writing with a fresh pair of eyes.***

*My advice:*have both people familiar to dietetic internships and people who are not read your dietetic internship personal statement.

The people who are familiar with the process will give you pointers about how to structure your statement to make sure you address the questions being asked, while the people who are not familiar with them will be able to catch grammatical and structural errors.

I would highly suggest getting using your university’s writing center or using the help of [All Access Internships](https://allaccessinternships.teachable.com/a/aff_329kq86l/external?affcode=218774_d9wrp2ba) to make sure your writing is perfect.

Don’t be shy about your statement, **you worked hard to get to this point and you should be proud of the work you’re putting forward**. If you don’t feel this way, maybe you’re not being 100% yourself in your writing. Which brings me to…

**5. You’re not genuine.**

Internship directors read a lot of statements. Some programs get well over 100 applications, all from students who badly want to be matched to their program.

So **what makes you so special to think you will stand out, huh?** No, it’s a serious question. What makes you special? Why are you doing this?

Part of doing your homework is knowing what a director is looking for in applicants, but don’t write only what you think the director wants. What do you really want?

***Write 100% from the heart…and you’ll know you did everything you could.***

**If you’re not genuine in your writing, it will show.** You will not be inspired and will end up with a half ass statement, plain and simple.

If you only write hoping you say the perfect things that the director wants to hear and then don’t match, *you will always wonder if there was something more you could have done or said*.

However, if you define your theme, know your purpose and goals for applying, and write 100% from the heart and then don’t match, **you’ll know you did everything you could.**You will be bummed, but will know you did your best.

Your personal statement should reflect who you are, that is why it’s called “personal.” You did the work, you’ve gotten this far, and now it’s time show it. You can do this, you will get it done. **Do the work and then sit back, relax, and know you gave it your all.**