

*Personal Statements and  
Letters of  
Recommendation  
by Example*

*For ESL Students  
Seeking Admissions to US  
Graduate/Business/Law School*

ToeflEssays.com

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# ***Personal Statements and Letters of Recommendation by Example***

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*Personal Statements and Letters of Recommendation by Example - For ESL Students Seeking Admissions to US Graduate/Business/Law Schools* provides an answer to a problem that many applicants, especially English-as-a-second-language applicants to the US graduate/business/law schools have: how to write effective admission essays. With more than 100 example personal statement essays and recommendation letters, each comprising of editor's detailed comment and final edited, ready to submit essay, this book will help you truly master the tips of admission essay writing, and improve your English writing proficiency. With edited essays and editor's comments positioned side by side, you will learn strategies and principles of writing an appropriate admission essay in a number of different and interesting contexts, such as what are the most effective beginnings, how to improve your tone, clarity and style, and how to tailor your essays for different schools. By working actively with the examples and comments in this book, you are sure to write a successful set of admission essays, and get admissions to prestigious US graduate schools.

This book is also good as a reading/writing textbook to improve your reading and writing skills, and teach you authentic English grammar and usage, as it contains corrections to common grammatical errors in students' essays, and detailed explanations of correct usage. Teachers will find it an effective tool to help instruct students to prepare for their admission essays.

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## Natural Science and Engineering

### Biology

Comment	Revised Essay
<p><i>"A glimmer of blue is twinkling in the dark, ....." What esteemed men they were and how hard they had done! I never forgot the touched feeling when I first read this paragraph in Madame Curie as a fourteen-year-old child. Later, this feeling changed into encouragement especially when I faced difficulty. From that time on, that magical blue light began twinkling in my heart, kindling in my way to the door of science, encouraging me to grope bravely to the unknown world.</i></p> <p>Your introductory quote from <i>Madame Curie</i> was good (P1). I rephrased your introduction to make it flow better:</p> <p><i>..... on the other hand, I could lessen my father's heavy burden.</i></p> <p>I removed some confusing references to your father's "burden," since it detracts from the narrative of your experience.</p> <p>I moved and rephrased your quote and reference to seeking further study at an intellectual mecca. This passage works better toward the end, to describe your decision to pursue graduate studies in the United States.</p> <p>I removed sentences</p>	<p>"A glimmer of blue is twinkling in the dark, Curies said nothing but looking at that beautiful light in their shed-laboratory, silently. That night they demonstrated their work on radioactivity. After processing over tons of pitchblende waste at the rate of 20kilograms a time, they isolated one tenth of a gram of pure radium and win Noble Prize for physics."</p> <p>I first read this paragraph from <i>Madame Curie</i> as a 14-year-old child, and I still remember how wonderful I felt. I remember thinking, "What esteemed men they were! How hard they worked!" As I grew older, this paragraph became a source of encouragement in the face of adversity. I begin to feel a magical blue light twinkling in my heart, kindling a love of science, and encouraging me to charge bravely into the unknown world.</p> <p>My father was the one who gave me that biography. He tried to instill in his children a love for science, nature and life. At that time, my father was an associate professor of biology at City University. My grandparents and mother, however, couldn't read even a word. As a child, I did homework in my father's lab. Sometimes I would watch curiously as he worked with his students and helped them find a particular vascular or muscle. I, too, wished to be one of my father's students.</p> <p>In middle school, I began to pursue this dream. I proudly entered the Mathematics Olympic School, where I won a prize in the National Math Contest and placed first in the [CITY] Physics Contest. Later, I attended City University's Department of Microbiology (DMSDU), one of [COUNTRY]'s oldest and largest microbiological departments. There, I became fascinated by the world of biology. My friends jokingly called me a "juice extractor of knowledge." I acquired an extensive knowledge of cellular, molecular, physiology, medical biology, as well as enrolled in an intensive curriculum of microbiology.</p> <p>During my summer vacations, I performed experiments at the State Key Laboratory, so that I could gain lab experience. During my junior and senior years, I minored in computer science. Merely performing experiments to accumulate facts is like calling a pile a bricks a house. Science requires processing data, which often requires computer competence. Although studying these two subjects was time consuming, my hard work and perseverance eventually paid off. I graduated in the top 5 percent of my department.</p> <p>After graduation, I performed scientific research work as the Institute of Chemical Engineering. I also participated in two research programs at the Biochemistry Group-key laboratory of [PROVINCE], under the purview of Professor George James of Purdue University. For the first time, I could work independently and cooperatively within a large program. After our team finished the program in 1999, I gained two Certificates of [COUNTRY'S] Science and Technology.</p> <p>Later, I met Professor Ivan Johnston, my present adviser, who was an expert in weed science and wanted to hire someone to perform microbial herbicide. The challenge was both attractive and promising. I saw it as an opportunity to find new structural chemicals and research the pathology of molecular mechanism. If I succeeded, it would be a big step for weed control, which in turn would benefit both humans and their environment. Here at Institute of Plant Protection, a part of the [COUNTRY'S] Academy of Agricultural Sciences, I have worked on <i>Trichoderma harzianum</i> as PGPR applied in Inner Mongolia. One of our big projects is to discover ways to change the deserts into productive plantations, so to contribute to poor western areas. Our team was recently featured on NTV, a national television station.</p>

like, "...which is very rare for a young girl in just two years in [COUNTRY]." You have to be careful about sounding too arrogant or self-serving. I tried to let your experiences speak for themselves.

But even now, I am not completely satisfied with myself. I never forgot my adolescent idol, Maria Curie. As I re-read the book, another passage leaped out: "She was now 24—an age when some of her great contemporaries were to be on the brink of major discoveries... Maria took the train from Warsaw to Paris, the intellectual mecca."

For me, the intellectual mecca is the United States. I now desire to study abroad. The United States has played a leading role in the field of biological science. There, I hope to continue my study and research, as detailed below. One day, I hope to find the pure esthetics of biology and reach its luminous summits.

## Biomedical Engineering

### Comment

Much of my work went into removing unessential details, smoothing out transitions between sentences and paragraphs and making your images more vivid and compelling – all in an attempt to tell a better story.

It is important to remember that the college application essay is like telling a story. And like any story, it must be compelling from the first sentence to the last. Admissions officers read a ton of essays in a very short period of time. That means that your essay must be tight and to the point. There can't be a lot of unnecessary details or he will lose interest.

In this vain, I removed a number of details that, although interesting, did not fit within the scope of the essay that you wrote. For example, I deleted the part of your original essay that refers to your parents' professions. It didn't fit into the story you were telling about your intellectual journey in the biomedical engineering field. Although interesting, it was unessential to the main thread of the story and therefore, I deleted it. The application essay is not a place to cram in as much stuff about you as you possibly can. It is a place to expose a part of who you are. After my revisions, it succeeds in doing this.

The **revised essay** is considerably shorter than your original essay. This is because all unessential and unnecessary details have been removed. The essay is complete. However, if you want to add another paragraph, you could do so and provide more details about your academic experience during your undergraduate years. If not the essay can stand on its own as I have revised it.

Finally, I removed all instances of grammatical error, wordiness, awkward word choices and run-on sentences. The result is a piece with improved comprehension, clarity and flow. I also smoothed out all the transitions between sentences and paragraphs and related everything more directly to your central theme.

Now let me review some changes in more specific detail:

*An experienced engineer now undertaking research work with XYZ company, one of the largest biomedical engineering companies in [COUNTRY], I would like to scale higher intellectual height by undertaking advanced studies in your MS programs in Biomedical Engineering.*

I rewrote this introductory paragraph to provide a more gripping start to your essay. There is no need to introduce your topic in the stilted way you did here. Instead, I used the fascinating and tragic image of the woman you encountered with heart disease to start off the piece. The result is an introduction that grabs the reader from the first sentence onward.

### Revised Essay

When I walked into the hospital room, a lump formed in my throat. In the bed, a patient was asleep. Bathed in the yellow glow of the fluorescent lights above, her skin seemed pale and her body thin and weak. She was suffering from heart disease. To my surprise however, she had no portable heart monitor to check her condition. Her doctor informed me that this was because it is too expensive and the hospital can't afford it. I knew then that I wanted to become a bioengineer so that I could create affordable, helpful medical devices for those people suffering in hospitals around the world and specifically in my home country.

Several years before that day, when I was seventeen, I won acceptance into the Institute of Light Industry - the leading light industrial school in [COUNTRY]. Majoring in food sciences and engineering, I did well because I was strong in the mathematics, biology and chemistry required for the subject matter. However, I always felt that I there was something more I could do for those around me.

The next summer, half way through my undergraduate career, I began working at the [City] Friendship Hospital. This was a medical facility designed to help people with [disease]. It was here that I saw the woman suffering from heart disease and decided what my life passion would be. With my goals now clearly set in my mind, I refocused my academic studies on biomedical engineering. At the same time, I also got involved in a variety of related activities. I founded the bioengineering

This, again, is a paragraph that I deleted because it did not fit with the main thread of your essay. By deleting it I was able to vastly improve the piece's readability, flow and clarity.

*Majoring in food sciences and engineering, an interdisciplinary program which requires learners strong background of science, biology and engineering, I, luckily, accepted strict training in these disciplines.*

This is a run-on sentence that I fixed in the **revised essay** by splitting it up into several smaller ones.

*With the diligent quality and curiosity for any new subject I encountered in study, I made me an excellent student recognized by the department. In my class of 62 students, I consistently ranked among top 5% and was awarded student scholarship for 4 consecutive years*

I remove these details because, again, they were unessential to your story. In addition, details such as these have a place elsewhere in your application and not in the essay. Remember that the application essay is not a place to cram as much stuff as you can. It is a place to tell a tight and focused story that represents who you are in a meaningful way.

Here, again, I moved this paragraph to the introduction to better take advantage of the gripping nature of its images.

*Through these experiences, I have learned the most valuable lessons in my study and work: diligence, team spirit, creativity are the three necessities for successful research work, and I am now confident that I am embark on research work in a new field.*

This sentence was filled with clichés so I deleted it. Clichés and vague declarations do not effectively convey to the reader what is unique about you. It is always better to have specific details rather than vague generalizations.

*It has got the best combination quality faculty, many state-of-the-art facilities, and an intriguing academic environment.*

An admissions officer will notice immediately in this sentence that you have provided no real specifics about his school. You must be specific here otherwise it will look as if you only gave the school a cursory examination. In the **revised essay** I provided a prompt for you to fill in more detailed information about what makes the school the right choice for you.

In addition, I brought back the initial image in this, the concluding paragraph, to better bring the story full circle.

club to spread knowledge and exchange ideas about the rapidly developing bioengineering world.

Upon graduation, I began working at Dieppxy Biomedical Engineering Company. While there I joined a research group for biomedical instrumentation and signal processing to develop a multi-passage recording, reviewing and analysis system for long term EEG signals. I worked on the project from beginning to end. I first built a double-T band-stop filter network for ultra-weak signals to serve as an essential part of the EEG hardware. Then I successfully set up the filter network and finally perfecting the clinical EEG software. The work was wonderfully fascinating.

I knew, however, that to achieve my professional goals of returning to [COUNTRY] and bringing the lagging biomedical engineering field up to international standards, there was still more I needed to know. After carefully comparing the strengths of a number of MS programs, I found that XYZ University, specifically with its focus on [disease] could provide me with the knowledge and skills necessary to make my goals come to fruition. I often think back to that day at the hospital and daydream about how much more improved that woman would have been with better medical equipment to help her. I am determined to do provide just that.

## Comment

These recommendations are outstanding and Mr. Lee is to be commended for his many achievements.

All necessary changes will be made to the three letters of recommendation to put the writing into Standard English. I will explain my corrections as I edit these letters.

I have changed the wording in the first sentence from "...I am writing with pleasure..." to "...it is my pleasure to

## Revised Letters

As Mr. Lee's supervisor for two years, it is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation requesting that he be accepted into your graduate program.

Mr. Lee and I work for Dieppxy Bioengineering Company in [City], [COUNTRY]'s capital. In the company, Mr. Lee has always been an inspiring source of help and support for others and me. Conscientious and diligent, he has contributed more than his share to this company's productive and highly valued research.

After joining our company, he was accepted into a very strict training program within the company. In the process he mastered several of the latest techniques including NMR and displayed an impressive capability in grasping specialized knowledge. He applied professional principles to the