VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
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HOW TO:
WRITE A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Personal essays are a necessary part of the graduate school application process. These essays not only serve to demonstrate the depth of your writing but also give the admissions committee a glimpse of your personality and character that would not be easily reflected through your transcripts. We have compiled a few tips to keep in mind when writing your essays and how to ensure that they are a polished representation of your preparedness for graduate school.

Personal Statements vs. Statements of Purpose

The first step when writing your essays for graduate school is to determine what type of essay you will be writing. While both are used in applications, there are significant differences in these types of essays that one must know before writing:

Personal Statement	Statement of Purpose
Focuses on you (motivations, experiences, skills)	Focuses on the program (why this specific program & how it aligns with your goals)
Content: Broader look at experiences that shaped you	Content: Specific academic achievements & research interests
Style: Can be more personal and creative	Style: More formal and academic tone
Length: Varies depending on program (often shorter)	Length: Often longer and more detailed

After you have determined the type of essay you will be writing, make sure that you copy the prompt and paste it into your Word Document to easily refer to it and help ensure that you are answering all questions. Also, bear in mind your page and/or word limit. If you need help with editing, please refer to the Campus Resources below.

WRITING TIPS FOR STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE:

For personal statements, please see our Personal Statement Guide

As mentioned above, a statement of purpose tends to be more academic in nature and scope than a personal statement, and usually encapsulates your academic and research interests, as well as professors that you wish to work with within the program. Follow these writing tips to help with flow, focus, and to ensure that you are covering all subject matter.

Remember: you do not need to follow these tips exactly—do what feels most natural when writing. That is what second drafts are for!

Read Program Requirements Closely:

- Follow the application guidelines meticulously. Tailor your statement to address any specific prompts or questions they ask.

Highlight Research Interests:

- Clearly articulate your research interests and desired area of specialization within the program. Show your knowledge of the field's current trends.

Methodology Prowess:

- Discuss your research methodology skills (qualitative, quantitative, etc.) and how you plan to apply them to your graduate studies.

Know Your Audience:

- Research the specific program and tailor your statement to their faculty and research focus. Highlight how your goals align with theirs.

Faculty Connection:

- Research the program's faculty and their areas of expertise. Mention specific professors whose research aligns with yours and how you see yourself collaborating.

Future Goals:

- Explain how this program will equip you to achieve your long-term career goals. Demonstrate a clear vision for how your studies will contribute to your chosen field.

Highlight Relevant Skills:

- Showcase previous research experiences, internships, or projects that demonstrate your research skills and preparedness for graduate-level work.

Funding Considerations:

- If applicable, mention potential funding sources (research grants, fellowships) you might pursue to support your graduate studies.

Program Advantages:

- Explain what specifically draws you to this program. Highlight unique resources, faculty expertise, or research opportunities that set it apart for your goals.

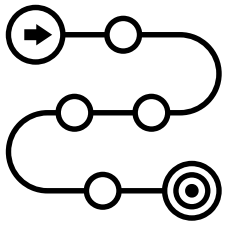
Conciseness is Key:

- While providing details, stay within the word limit. Focus on the most relevant and impactful information.

Professional Tone:

- Maintain a formal and academic writing style throughout. Proofread for clarity and accuracy to make a strong first impression.

HOW TO DEVELOP AN OUTLINE FOR YOUR ESSAY:



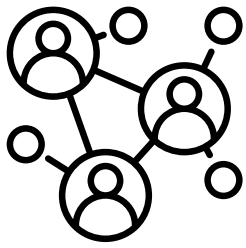
Brainstorm Academic Experiences:

- Identify your program of choice, your academic experiences, and what sparked your interest in continuing your education in this area. Ask yourself these questions: What are my current research interests within this field? How will this specific graduate program equip me to achieve those goals? Are there specific faculty members whose research aligns with mine? What are the unique aspects of this program that draw me in?

Develop an Outline:

- Your outline does not have to be a full essay, but should cover the main points below:
  - Introductory Paragraph
    - **Hook:** Connect your academic interest to a personal story that connects with the reader.
    - **Thesis & Preview:** Explain how/why you are a good fit for "x" graduate program and preview some of your rationale
  - Body Paragraphs
    - Crafting a strong graduate school application essay requires showcasing your academic background through relevant achievements, coursework, and research experiences. Next, delve into your specific research interests, including current trends and potential areas you'd like to explore. Demonstrate your awareness of the program's faculty by highlighting professors whose expertise aligns with your goals and how their guidance could fuel collaboration. Finally, tie it all together by expressing your long-term career aspirations and how this specific program, with its unique strengths, will equip you to achieve them.
  - Conclusion
    - Conclude by reiterating your passion for the field and your suitability for the program. Express your enthusiasm for contributing to their research community.

CAMPUS RESOURCES:



Villanova Writing Center:

- For grammatical issues, syntax, structure, and final polishing, schedule an appointment with the Writing Center, located in 210 Falvey. You can book an appointment online here: villanova.mywconline.com

Villanova Career Center:

- To review topic choices, overall structure, impact of storytelling, and final drafts, schedule an appointment with the Career Center.
- Navigate to Handshake and select "Personal Statement and Document Review" as the appointment type
- **Note: Pre-Law Students should meet with Alex Karlesses, and Pre-Health Students should meet with John McGranaghan.** All other programs can choose any counselor.