

WRITING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. What is your purpose in writing this statement?

The purpose is to persuade the admissions committee that you are an applicant they should choose. You may wish to show that you have the ability and motivation to succeed in your field, or you may wish to show the committee that, on the basis of your experience, you are the kind of candidate that will do well in the field. Whatever the purpose, it must be explicit to give coherence to the whole statement.

2. How do you determine the content of your statement?

Be sure to answer any direct questions fully. Analyze the questions or guidance statements for the essay completely and answer all parts. For example: "What are your strengths and weaknesses in setting and achieving goals and working through people?" In this question there are actually six parts to be answered. 1) strengths in setting goals; 2) strengths in achieving goals; 3) strengths in working through (not with) people; 4) weaknesses in setting goals; 5) weaknesses in achieving goals; 6) weaknesses in working through people.

3. Usually graduate and professional schools are interested in the following:

- A. Why do you want to go to graduate school?
- B. The area of study in which you wish to specialize. This requires that you know the field well enough to make such a decision.
- C. Your career goals and plans for the future.
- D. Your special preparation and fitness for study in the field. This is the opportunity to relate your academic background with your extracurricular experience to show how they unite to make you a special candidate.
- E. Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores such as a bad quarter. Be sure to explain in a positive manner and justify the explanation. Since this is a rebuttal argument, it should be followed by a positive statement of your abilities.
- F. Any special conditions that are not revealed elsewhere in the application such as a large work load outside of school. This, too, should be followed by a positive statement about yourself and your future.
- G. You may be asked, "Why do you wish to attend this school?" This requires that you have done your research about this school and know what its special appeal is to you.
- H. Above all, this statement is to contain information about you as a person. The only thing they know about you is what you tell them. You are the subject of the statement.

4. Some things you should avoid while writing your statement of purpose:

- a. Avoid the "what I did with my life" approach.
- b. Avoid the "always wanted to be a ____." This is only appropriate if it reflects current goals.
- c. Avoid using jargon and academese. Write in a direct and straightforward manner.

5. Some things that the statement should be:

- a. It should be objective and self-revelatory.
- b. It should form conclusions that explain the value and meaning of your experience such as a) what you learned about yourself; b) about your field; c) about your future goals; d) about your career concerns. Draw your conclusions from the evidence your life provides.
- c. It should be specific. Document your conclusions with specific instances or draw your conclusions as the result of individual experience.
- d. It should be an example of careful, persuasive writing.

6. Words to avoid without explanation:

significant	interesting	challenging	satisfying	rewarding
gratifying	meant a lot to me	stimulating	incredible	invaluable
exciting	enjoyable	I can contribute	valuable	helpful
useful	feel good	remarkable	appealing to me	I like it
it's important	fascinating	appreciate	helping people	experience