



Writing a Personal Statement for Grad School

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What happens to those essays you turn in?

- they go to review committees who are reading up to 100 such, so
- watch out for typographical and physical limitations of those readers
= FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS EXACTLY

What are they used for?

- to audition you as a person
- to audition you as a qualified student
- to audition you as a possible colleague

Tell us, to introduce yourself

As a person, . . .

- how you decided to choose this field (personal anecdote, but short)
- what value(s) you see in pursuing this (why is the field important to you as a person)
- what human experiences you have had that brought you to make this decision

As a qualified student, . . .

- what skills do you bring to the table for this study (do you have the right languages? statistics? computer work? Job experience that relates?)
- what skills do you hope to add to your repertoire? (knowing what you DON'T know gets you points; sounding like you want to learn gets you points)
- what related skills will help you (things not obvious, but which will help)

As a possible colleague, . . .

- present yourself as part of the discipline you're planning to study (wanting to work in some of its environments, with its materials, on its projects)
- present yourself as part of the discipline as represented in that program (i.e. do your research so your goals match what they have)
- present yourself as interested in issues in today's profession (go read the big journals of the professional organization, their conference program)
- present yourself as aware of the kind and amount of work required in the profession
- present yourself as interested in the program's environment (facilities, town, region; DO YOUR RESEARCH on who's there in neighboring departments)

MECHANICS:

- no funny fonts
- impeccably proofread
- paragraph breaks and logical rhetorical transitions
- spell names right

••And don't forget that the Graduate Coordinator/secretary needs to be your best friend!