There are two types of personal statements: those that require you to answer prompts and those that provide few or no directions. If not specified, your personal statement should be approximately 1.5 to 2 pages in length.

Before you begin writing your personal statement, take time to reflect on your past experiences, reasons for applying to graduate school, and what makes you stand out from the other applicants. Answering the questions below will provide a strong foundation for writing your personal statement.

+ What is missing from your application packet that you want the committee to know about you?
+ What is unique, special, and distinctive about you or your experiences?
+ How did you get interested in this field and what has been the impact of the field on your life experiences so far?
+ What are your career goals?
+ Are there any gaps in your academic record that you should explain?
+ What personal characteristics and/or skills do you possess that will help you succeed in this profession?
+ What have you learned about this field throughout your various experiences and education?
+ Have you overcome any hardships or obstacles?
+ What makes you a strong fit for this program?
+ Why are you interested in this specific school?
**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- **Tell a story/Concentrate on your opening paragraph.** Make your statement memorable by writing a story with concrete details that are unique and lively. Draw the reader in with your unique story and build upon this throughout the statement.

- **Be specific.** What skills have you developed that will allow you to succeed? Also consider what you are going to do after graduate school and what skills you will learn from the program that will make you a great advertising executive, English professor, or researcher, for example.

- **Do some research and know your audience.** Mention parts of the curriculum that are in line with your areas of interest and specific faculty with whom you want to do research.

- **Avoid certain subjects and clichés.** If possible, avoid talking about experiences from high school or other controversial topics (religious/political issues), unless they are relevant to the program to which you are applying. Avoid generic reasoning (such as attending art school because you are creative) whenever possible. Answer the questions on the previous page to help you avoid clichés.

- **Showcase your fit.** Make sure that you explain why you are a good fit for the program as well by doing research about the program, classes offered, and faculty members in the department. Demonstrate through your personal statement that you and the program are a good match by providing examples and tying together your experiences.

**PERSONAL STATEMENT FORMULA**

1. **Where You’ve Been**
   - It is important to include a paragraph or two stating your past experiences and qualifications for the graduate program. This can include discussing past coursework, research, internships, and volunteer activities that tell a story about the background you are bringing to the program.

2. **Where You’re Going**
   - Be sure to highlight how receiving this graduate degree factors into your long term goals.

3. **Why This School**
   - Describe how the coursework, research opportunities, and faculty mentorship that the particular program offers are related to your long-term goals.

The following diagram is one popular way of formulating your personal statement. Schedule an appointment with your career advisor to discuss your personal statement in detail.