

Writing Your Personal Statement

In the following activities, you'll learn about what exactly a personal statement is and learn about how to go about writing your own.

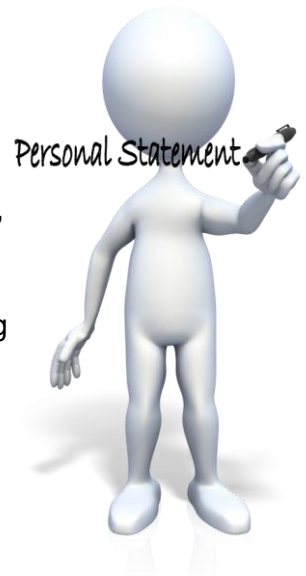
Activity 1: What Is a Personal Statement?

A personal statement is sometimes called an application essay or a statement of purpose. You often need to write personal statements when you are applying for a university or college course, accommodation, a training program, a scholarship, or even a job.

Personal statements are a way of communicating to the person assessing our application a little more about who we are. It's an opportunity for us to show off our strengths and share a little bit about our interests and aspirations for the future.

A personal statement should be a summary or a snapshot of who you are in the context of what you have applied for.

A well-written personal statement can make the difference between your application being successful or unsuccessful.



Have you ever written a personal statement? If so, what was it for?

How happy were you with that personal statement? What could you improve on in future?

Activity 2: What Does a Personal Statement Contain?

While some of the specific details of what you'll include on your personal statement will depend on the particular purpose of the personal statement, there are some general areas that nearly every personal statement will include. These are your:

- Academic Achievements
- Leadership Experience/Qualities
- Communication/Teamwork Qualities
- Personal Attributes/Favourable Qualities
- Sporting Involvement/Achievements
- Community Participation/Involvement

Now, go to the Secure Student Area of your school careers website. On the menu on the left hand side, scroll down and select the tab marked "*Personal Statement*".

Here you will find a template using the categories above. You can record the appropriate information in each section to generate your personal statement to download. In this lesson however, you'll use the template to make notes from. You will then use these notes to write your personal statement after working through the activities below.

The *Personal Statement* tool on your school careers website is an excellent tool for reference in the development of your applications.

Activity 3: How to Structure Your Personal Statement

Understanding how to structure a good personal statement is very important. Once you get to grips with this underlying framework, you can efficiently produce and update personal statements as you progress through your education, training, or career.

The following table provides a framework suitable for writing personal statements for most purposes. Use it when it comes time to write your personal statement.

Structuring a Personal Statement	
<i>Paragraph Purpose</i>	<i>Proportion of Statement</i>
Opening Paragraph: Explain why you are applying for the course, scholarship, position etc.	80%
Body Paragraphs: 3 to 4 paragraphs on how your qualities, attributes, qualifications, and experience make you the perfect applicant	
A Closing Paragraph: A brief paragraph describing your aspirations for the future and how they relate to this application	20%

Activity 4: Personal Statement Checklist

In the table below, you'll now find some general tips to help you write your personal statement. Apply these tips while you write your statement then, when you have completed your statement, you can use the information in the table as a checklist.

Personal Statement Checklist		
<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>	<i>Tick</i> ✓
Be concise	Every word matters, you want to say what you need to say in as few words as necessary, don't waste your own or the assessor's time by being too long winded	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure appropriately	Use the above guidelines in the previous activity to help you structure your personal statement appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid cliché	The key word here is 'personal'! Using clichéd language smacks of laziness and does nothing to help your application stand out from the masses. Avoid overused words and phrases such as 'my passion', 'from a young age' etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include suitable activities	Mention activities that allow you to display helpful personality traits such as leadership, problem solving ability, commitment, creativity etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Draft and redraft	Time invested in crafting your personal statement will help ensure your application is successful. Ask for feedback from parents, teachers, friends to help you craft the perfect statement	<input type="checkbox"/>

Proofread everything	Be sure you don't let poor grammar and spelling mistakes create a bad impression, be sure to take several run throughs to proofread effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be enthusiastic in tone	Your job here is to convince the person reading your statement that you are a perfect choice for the course, position etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Link outside interests and activities	This will help tailor your statement to particular course, position etc. choices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid exaggeration	Honesty is the best policy! Don't set yourself up for a very uncomfortable interview by <i>overegging the cake</i> - let the facts speak for themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't leave it to the last minute	Your personal statement is important, give it the attention it deserves by preparing it well in advance. Now is a good time to start!	<input type="checkbox"/>



Activity 5: Write Your Personal Statement

Now you have a good idea of what a personal statement is and how to write one, use what you have learned to write your own by following the steps below:

1. Start by thinking of a context in which you'll be needing a personal statement in the near future. It might be when applying for a university or college course, a scholarship, accommodation, a job etc. Record this in the space below:

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2. Use the information recorded in your *Personal Statement* template in the *Secure Student Area* of your school careers website along with the information in the *Structuring a Personal Statement* table above to draft your personal statement.

3. When you have completed a draft of your personal statement, use the *Personal Statement Checklist* above to assess, refine, and complete a final version of your personal statement.

Good Luck!