



Personal Statement Workshop

Overview

The personal statement is:

- A professional piece of writing
 - You are applying to a pre-professional program – your personal statement should be clear, concise, and straightforward - no need for creative risks here
 - Before you submit, make sure your personal statement is free of spelling and grammatical errors – have someone you trust look over your statement to provide feedback and revise your statement before submitting
- An opportunity to let us know who you are
 - What cause do you care about most and how did you come to care about it?
 - While you may mention influential people in your life, please keep the statement focused on you
- A confirmation
 - You are confident that you want to go to law school
 - You know why you want to go to law school
 - Law school is a commitment you are ready to make
 - Law school is necessary to achieve your long-term career goals

The personal statement is not:

- An all-encompassing statement of the multifaceted, complex person that you are
- A mandatory prompt for you to talk about the hardest thing you have ever been through
- A commitment to practicing a specific type of law
- Information that is communicated by other parts of your application (i.e. your transcript, resume, optional statement)
- A “since I was young, I’ve always known I would be a lawyer because...” story
- An essay you can write in one draft
- A lengthy ode to Harvard Law School

Format (be sure to check the requirements for each school you apply to)

- 2 pages
- Double spaced
- Minimum 11-point font
- 1-inch margins



Step Two: Create an Outline

Make a plan for how you want to structure your essay and fill in the details. Start by drafting a thesis statement or elevator pitch that explains why you want to go to law school.

Example:

First Paragraph: Lead with an anecdote or story.

- *Speak to an experience that has been significant in your decision to pursue law.*

Body Paragraphs: Convey who you are and why you want to go to law school. You do not need to include answers to each of these questions in your personal statement. Select the ones that resonate most with you.

- What kind of lawyer do you hope to be? Why?
 - *What values and ideals are important to you?*
 - *How will you incorporate those values/ideals into your future legal work?*
- What experiences have shaped your desire to study law and/or be a lawyer?
 - *What did you get out of these experiences?*
 - *What specific skills did you learn? How will these translate to the practice and/or study of law?*
 - *What have these experiences taught you about the law or the legal field?*
 - *How have these experiences confirmed, strengthened, or clarified your decision to go to law school?*
 - *How have they prepared you to succeed in law school and/or in a future legal career?*
- What type(s) of law do you think you want to pursue? Why?
 - *What do you care most about and how does that relate to your legal interest area(s)?*
 - *What inspired this/these specific legal interest(s)?*
 - *What do you hope to achieve in this/these interest area(s)? Why?*
- Why is now the best time for you to get your law degree?
 - *What will a law degree enable you to achieve that you could not achieve without a law degree?*
 - *Are you at a transition point where going back to school makes sense? How so?*

Conclusion: Tie it all together

- Don't force it: let your essay come to its natural conclusion
- Avoid declarative statements, clichés, and quotes
- Only refer back to your opening anecdote if it makes sense
- Leave the reader with an understanding of who you are and why you're applying to law school



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Step Three: Write Your First Draft

Your personal statement should undergo several revisions before submitting. Some tips for revising:

- Read your essay aloud to identify typos, grammatical errors, and structural issues
- Ask for feedback from people you trust so they can:
 - Tell you their take-away from your essay – it should convey who you are and why you want to go to law school
 - Flag missing pieces or information
 - Point out anything in your essay that is confusing or needs elaboration
 - Provide feedback on the structure of your essay
 - Highlight grammatical and/or spelling errors
- For big changes, rewrite instead of editing
 - It can be tempting to keep existing language and structure, but you will likely end up with a better product if you start fresh