

Writing a Personal Statement

Dept of Human Development and Family
Science
North Dakota State University

NDSU

Purpose

- To state your desire for admission into the program
- To present (e.g., “sell”) yourself effectively and in an interesting way
- To demonstrate that you write well

What to Include

- Research interests and fit with the department
- College experiences: research, work, community service, relevant coursework, accomplishments
- Anything special, unique, distinctive, and impressive about yourself that sets you apart from other applicants
- Personal characteristics that make you well-suited for graduate school
- Goals for the program and/or career goals

What *NOT* to Include

- High school accomplishments
- Controversial topics
- Information that is already in your application (e.g., your major or GPA) unless you plan to elaborate (e.g., my major enabled me to...)

Highlight Your “Fit” with the Program

- Identify current research interests
- Select 1-3 faculty members that you may want to work with
- Explain how your research interests are similar to or complement those of the faculty member(s) you identified

How to Write

- Be specific
- Be clear and concise
- Be upbeat and enthusiastic
- Be genuine and truthful (be yourself!)
- Do not be afraid to “toot your own horn” and speak of your accomplishments
- Avoid clichés (such as “I want to help people”)
- Concentrate on your first paragraph in order to grab your readers’ attention

Some General Guidelines

- 1-2 typed pages in length
- Proofread and spell-check carefully
- Read the statement aloud before submitting it
- Ask your friends or family members to read the statement and see if it sounds like you
- Ask a faculty member to read the statement and provide feedback