



Personal Statement Checklist

A statement of purpose or personal statement is generally considered a significant part of the application process for admission to undergraduate and/or graduate school and for a scholarship, fellowship, or research grant. As you go through the process of writing a statement of purpose or personal statement, carefully consider the following points:

- If you are applying to undergraduate and/or graduate school, you have researched the academic program as a means to have a better understanding of the requirements:
 - What kind of program is it?
 - Does it emphasize research?
 - Does it require fieldwork?
 - Is the curriculum focused on theory?
- Your statement has an unstated, implicit thesis: “I am an excellent applicant to this particular graduate program or for this specific scholarship/fellowship.”

All examples and evidence you use should support your thesis.

- Direct the reader’s attention to specific examples of the necessary skills and abilities required by the program for which you are applying: e.g., a major research project you did, an internship in the field you completed, a theory you successfully applied to an academic problem.
- Analyze your academic transcript.

What features of it speak for themselves and do not need to be repeated in your statement?

Are there aspects of your recorded academic experience that might need explanation?

- a break in continuity (transfer, change of major, etc.)
- certain assessments (a contrast between your overall GPA and your GPA in your major, etc.)
- curricular patterns (a large number of lower-level courses, an internship course taken twice, etc.)

- Try several different patterns of organization, e.g., standard essay structure, beginning with a quotation, beginning with an anecdote, narrative structure, etc. Then choose the pattern of organization that works best
- Listen to the voice in your statement. For example, active verb forms are more direct and suggest a more actively engaged writer/applicant.

Passive: “These courses were taken to increase my knowledge of global perspectives.”

Active: “I took these courses to increase my awareness of global perspectives.”

- Also, many students avoid using the first person pronoun in academic writing because instructors have advised them to adopt a more objective tone. However, one would argue that using the first person pronoun “I” is what makes the statement “personal.”

Use of the first person pronoun in your personal statement is unavoidable, but be careful not to use it too often or your statement can sound repetitious or even boastful. Focus your sentences on what you accomplished, what you experienced, not on yourself.

With the first person pronoun: “I took these courses to increase my awareness of global perspectives.”

Without the first person pronoun: “These courses increased my awareness of global perspectives.”

- Proofread carefully. Most admissions committee members read personal statements holistically, reading them through and assessing the impression the statements make on them. Correct grammar helps the reader through the statement, clearly expresses the writer’s ideas, clearly explains the applicant’s thought process in applying, and makes a good impression. Grammar errors and poorly chosen vocabulary make a bad impression, which makes it more difficult for a reader to appreciate the content of your statement.
- Consider the statement as part of your whole application.

How does it fit in your overall argument for admission or meriting an award?

When looked at with your transcript, letters of recommendation, test scores, and writing sample, does it make a coherent presentation?

Do all parts of your application support each other and your thesis?

- The first three points on this checklist make it clear that you should write a separate statement for each school or program that you are applying to or for each award you are applying for.

And you should seek help from an adviser, a mentor, and/or a tutor at the Hunter College RWC with any point on the checklist and/or any step in the process, about which you are unsure.

So make sure you give yourself enough time to do the best job you can in writing your statement and completing your application.