Personal Statements

Getting Started:

Read the prompt carefully, and determine your purpose. While some schools will ask for a general personal statement, others may ask a specific question.

Research everything! The university, the department, the professors in the department, the research areas of the faculty.

Writing Your Personal Statement:

(Adapted from Berkley University of California Career Center)

Take your time. Draft, revise, get feedback (especially from your professors), revise some more, proofread multiple times.

Be objective, yet self-revelatory. Write directly and in a straightforward manner that tells about your experience and what it means to you. While you should not use overly academic language, it should be clear that you are knowledgeable about the research area/field you intend to join.

Form conclusions that explain the value and meaning of your experience, such as what you learned about yourself and your field and your future goals. Draw your conclusions from the evidence your life provides.

Be specific. Document your conclusions with specific instances.

Get to the point early on and catch the attention of the reader.

Avoid:

Lecturing your reader

Listing accomplishments that are already evident on your CV

Clichéd or overly general phrasing

Sending the same personal statement to multiple schools

Gimmicks or humor