

College Essay / Personal Statement Outline Activity

What is a Personal Statement?

The Personal Statement is an essay, which allows you to share information about yourself while reflecting your interests and values. It is a chance to show you can think about things and that you can write clearly about your thoughts. If written correctly, it will allow you to stand out.

This essay can be used OVER and OVER again to apply for college admissions and/or scholarships. It is typically 300 words (one page) for larger, more competitive colleges and 500 words (two pages) for smaller, private colleges.

The following highlights key ideas to remember when writing your personal statement:

Essay DO's

- Be focused, specific and get to the point. (Be direct and clear.)
- Be interesting.
- Be creative.
- Be confident, but not arrogant.
- Be personal and write about yourself.
- Write an essay that only *you* can write.
- Convey a positive message overall.
- Describe things that you have experienced – sights, sounds, etc.
- Use basic English.
- Check carefully for grammatical errors and misspelled words.
- Have it proofread by someone else.

Essay DON'Ts

- Don't wait to the last minute.
- Don't talk about classes you've taken or activities you've participated in.
That is what transcripts, activity logs and resumes are for!
- Don't sound like a thesaurus in an effort to impress.
- Don't tell them what you think they want to hear.
- Don't assume that your statement won't be read.
- Don't spend a lot of time writing about just someone else (i.e.: parent, teacher)

Don't forget the essay is about YOU!

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This outline activity is to help you create a rough draft for your personal statement. Please remember, your final goal is to write an essay that proves a single point. The reader must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. **Also, keep in mind; it is about showing who you are by telling a story.** The final essay should be written in three basic parts: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.

1. Choose one of the four topic examples (Note, these are common topics used by major colleges for the college application process.)
 - ☐ **Topic Example #1:** Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
 - ☐ **Topic Example #2:** Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
 - ☐ **Topic Example #3:** Indicate a person (factual or fictional) who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
 - ☐ **Topic Example #4:** A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix.
2. What do you like about the topic? (List two details below using several words, bullets or phrases.)

Detail 1

Detail 2

3. What do you need to share that is necessary to your story about the topic?
(List two details below using several words, bullets or phrases.)

Detail 1

Detail 2

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4. What two qualities or skills do you possess, which you can share with the reader about this topic?
(List two qualities/skills below then describe those by using several words, bullets or phrases.)

Quality/Skill 1:

Description of Quality/Skill 1:

Quality/Skill 2:

Description of Quality/Skill 2:

5. What is the main idea/thesis of your essay: (Write one sentence) _____

6. Create a potential title for your essay: _____
