

## PERSONAL STATEMENTS: REVISING AND EDITING

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Personal Statements are hard to write because you're asked to boil down who you are and why you're worthy into two pages. The key is to engage your audience with a brief, clear statement about how you will enrich their particular program.

### REVISING AND EDITING

Once you are in the polishing stage - be merciless! Cross out paragraphs that don't work; rearrange ideas so that they make logical sense; watch out for redundancy and delete any sentences that seem to be restating earlier ideas; make sure that your essay is entirely free of mechanical or grammar errors. In addition,

- Consider your audience – put yourself in the shoes of the admissions committee – is your essay engaging and unique without being gimmicky?
- Cross off ideas that are too general, common, or cliché.
- Stay positive – turn your struggles into learning experiences.
- Show don't *just* tell, i.e., instead of writing, "I have always wanted to be a doctor," give more, as in: "one of my favorite, least embarrassing childhood photos is of me at four, wearing scrubs six sizes too big and holding a stethoscope fashioned from cardboard and Barbie clothes."
- Don't waste time or limited space by repeating information.
- Pay attention to the prompt and word count. Pick out any objectives or traits that the program or scholarship has specified.
- Neither showing off nor groveling will get you anywhere.

### WRITING WITHOUT GRANDIOSE LANGUAGE

Self-confidence vs. conceit—this is a fine line. The best way to avoid conceit is to be specific to *your* situation and goals. It is impossible to not talk about yourself in the personal essay. If you find yourself avoiding the *I*, return to it, but don't simply list all the amazing things you've done. A list of your accomplishments will be both exhausting and boring for your reader. Instead, share a specific detail about an event. For example, if you worked at an orphanage in India, take a moment to reflect on your experience with one child; or if you won a prestigious science award, fill your reader in on your research and what you learned from the experience.

- Avoid teaching about a subject in your writing.
- Show yourself at different stages of your life.

Reflection is a key player in diffusing the ego. Consider how you have been changed by some of your experiences. Consider how you hope to grow from opportunities. Make it personal and relevant.

Consider the people and opportunities that helped you become who you are today. Know that you did not get here alone. Consider where you want to go, know that you will also need to learn from people and experiences in order to get there. *Important Note: Each discipline emphasizes different elements in the application essay. To make sure that you are crafting an appropriate essay, meet with an advisor or professor in your discipline. Good luck!*

