

The Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose may well be the single most important part of your application to graduate school. It informs the admissions committee about you—your interests, the influences that have set you on your chosen career journey, your potential as a professional colleague, and your future plans as an academic.

There are as many techniques to writing a successful Statement of Purpose as there are applicants. Some writers chose to approach it straightforwardly, as a bald statement of facts. Others may chose to use stories, anecdotes, and personal observations about their influences, the people they admire, or the moment they realized what they wanted to do with their lives. In any case, what is important is that the writing be crisp, cogent, concise, and clear. There is no room for technical error either; incorrectly spelled words and grammar usage issues are a sure way to tell an admissions committee that you do not do careful work.

In many ways, the Statement of Purpose is the only part of your application packet over which you have full control at the time of your application. Your GPA is already set in stone, as are your GRE or GMAT scores (or they soon will be), and the content of your recommendation letters are not within your control. But you can consider this an opportunity, since the Statement of Purpose is a direct address to the members of the admissions committee, and *in your own words*, you can set yourself apart from the field of qualified candidates from which the committee has to chose.

Your Statement of Purpose gives you a chance to convince the committee that your talents make you the best match for the position for which you are applying. While your grades may indicate your ability to master the classroom situation, and your GRE or GMAT scores can serve as a predictor your transition to graduate school learning styles, the Statement of Purpose highlights the intangibles: your desire to complete a graduate degree in your chosen field, your ability to express yourself, your insightfulness, and even more importantly, your ability to master the written word.

This workshop is designed to get you beyond the jitters of looking at that blank screen on your monitor. While it may frighten the writer when he/she first looks at the “perfect” essay examples in admissions guidebooks, writing the Statement of Purpose is not something that should ever be put off. Procrastinating until the last second to write it is a good way to sabotage your chances of admission, since the final product, if substandard, will say a good bit about your lackadaisical

work ethic and lack of professional pride. By the same token, a well-written, concise and clean (or errors) Statement of Purpose will show that you exercise care and attention to the task at hand.

Websites on Statements of Purpose

Preparing Your Statement of Purpose & Personal Statement

<http://www.english.ucsb.edu/undergrad/aftermajor/statement-of-purpose.asp>

Tips on writing an SOP

<http://www.cs.umd.edu/Grad/sop.html>

How to Write a Great Statement of Purpose

<http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/gradapp/stmtpurpose.htm>

WRITING A WINNING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE`

<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/gcallaghan/graduate/winningstatement.htm>

Graduate School – Statement

<https://career.berkeley.edu/Grad/GradStatement.stm>

The Statement of Purpose

<http://www.statementofpurpose.com/>

Sample Essays

http://www.statementofpurpose.com/essay_samples.html

It's All in the Details: Writing an Effective Personal Statement

<http://acceptedtogradschool.com/tag/how-to-write-a-personal-statement-psychology-phd-graduate-school/>

Articles on Statements of Purpose

Adams, Howard G., *Successfully Negotiating the Graduate School Process: A Guide for Minority Students*. ERIC Document #ED291271. 1985.

Samraj, Betty, and Lenore Monk. *The Statement of Purpose in Graduate Program Applications: Genre Structure and Disciplinary Variation*. *English for Specific Purposes* 27.2 (2008): 193-211.