



# CRAFTING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Graduate directors for both master's and doctorate programs agree that the personal—or professional—statement is an important aspect of a prospective graduate student's application.

Reviewers use personal statements to assess applicants' communication skills, learn about their research interests, and, most importantly, to gain some insights into who the applicant is as an individual. Here are some common do's and don'ts as told by GSU College of Arts & Sciences faculty:

## TL;DR



**DON'T** send a generic statement, using vague, simplistic language  
**DO** show your personality

**DO** specify *why* GSU



**DON'T** focus on storytelling what prompted you to apply

**DO** list your research interests

**DO** explain any anomalies in your application

**DO** edit your personal statement

## DON'T SEND A GENERIC STATEMENT, USING VAGUE, SIMPLISTIC LANGUAGE.

**Instead, display your command of industry specific vernacular.**

Success is often based on your ability to write with clarity and present information in a logical, well-supported manner.

Demonstrating a level of sophistication while sharing your research interests and academic background give graduate directors confidence in your ability to succeed in a graduate program.

## DO SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

**Share your motivations and passion, sell your skills, and give the reviewer a chance to get to know the authentic you.**

Throughout your statement, show how you exhibit some of the personality traits and characteristics that graduate directors look for in their students (listed in no particular order): leadership, initiative, responsibility, reliability, judgement, intellect, maturity, self-confidence, empathy, integrity, professionalism, independence, work ethic, and time management.



**Pro-tip:** If you're interested in being considered for an assistantship—teaching or otherwise—highlight your leadership skills.

## DO SPECIFY WHY GSU

**Specify why you want to study at GSU and in the department to which you're applying.**

Highlight courses and professors that drew you toward this program, describing why our program is a good fit for your learning and professional goals and interests.



## DON'T FOCUS ON STORYTELLING WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO APPLY

**Instead, use your statement as an opportunity to explore why you are passionate about the program to which you are applying.**

Highlight how previous academic successes and research or job experiences have prepared you to succeed in graduate school. Link your previous education and work-related experiences to your learning goals.

Share specific moments in your life that contributed to your decision to apply. For example, describe a course, professor, or text that sparked a research interest. This will show maturity of thought about your decision to apply, your love of learning, and drive to learn new things. It will pave the way for a description of your proposed specialization or research interest within the degree.

**“Some applicants spend way too much time on the story and not enough on who they really are and why they are passionate about their choice.”**

## DO LIST YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS

**Give examples of research skills you've gained in previous educational or professional settings, using specific and clear descriptions.**

Although master's applicants aren't required to articulate a research project, the ability to do so is an asset and will set you apart from others.

For doctoral applicants, decisions are made, in part, based on the department's ability to support research interests.



**Pro-tip:** Provide a detailed statement about your research interests and name-drop proposed faculty to supervise. You won't be held to this proposal; however, it will give reviewers insight into your interests.

**“I am moved when [applicants] want to use their time here to investigate important social issues and then use that knowledge to help make a difference in the world for a cause.”**

## DO EXPLAIN ANY ANOMALIES IN YOUR APPLICATION

**For example, a lower GPA caused by a personal loss or other trauma that severely affected your grades for a semester or two.**

Be honest; don't be afraid to show your resilience. A thorough explanation will include how you overcame the hardship and any lessons learned that you can apply to future studies.

## DO EDIT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

**Check for proper use of grammar and spelling.**

Ensure there are no typos. Try to keep it short—a page or less will do.



**QUESTIONS ABOUT APPLYING? [Contact the Office of Graduate Services.](#)**