

A Winning Statement of Purpose (aka “Personal Statement”)

(Derived from the webpage of Glenn M. Callaghan, Dept of Psychology, SJSU. Thanks!)

1. Statement of Purpose tells committee who you are
 - a. Along with Letters of recommendation, it is a narrative description
 - b. Make good use of it!
 - i. Be thoughtful and plan your approach...
2. Determine your primary purpose in writing the statement:
 - a. Show you have necessary abilities
 - b. Demonstrate that you are motivated to succeed
 - c. You will do well in the field
 - d. Whatever you emphasize, be sure to stick to that point and to leave out extraneous materials
 - e. Remember! You are dealing with experts
 - i. Be sure to show that you CAN think as well as what you think...
3. Determine the content of your statement:
 - a. Answer any direct questions fully
 - b. Before answering, analyze any questions/guiding statements completely
 - i. What do they want to know? Answer all parts!
 - c. Usually graduate schools want to know:
 - i. Your purpose in going to grad school;
 - ii. Your intended specialization within the field;
 - iii. Your future use of your grad education;
 - iv. Your preparation and fitness for the field;
 - v. Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores;
 - vi. Anything else that is not revealed through other documents.
4. Settle on an approach/style
 - a. No perfect way to write a statement, but you can avoid some poor approaches:
 - i. “What I did with my life...”
 - ii. “I’ve always wanted to be a...”
 - b. Be objective & straightforward yet reveal yourself
 - i. Don’t use jargon
 - c. Remember: you are trying to get into graduate school... be persuasive!
5. Final points:
 - a. Keep to the page limit
 - b. Eliminate all typographical and grammatical errors