

PERSONAL STATEMENT LAB

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PERSONAL STATEMENT VS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE?

Features	Personal Statement	Statement of Purpose
Needed for graduate school and fellowship applications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1 to 2 pages in length	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Vary by culture and country	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(In the US) Evaluation of personal thoughts, feelings, and reflection (in relation to the application requirements)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
(In the US) Evaluation of what the applicant has done and plans to do academically		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

PERSONAL STATEMENT VS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE?

Main Points to Remember:

- 1. In some cases there might not be a difference between a PS and SOP.**
- 2. In ALL cases, read the directions carefully!**

PREPARATION: LOOKING AT THEM

What is the program looking for in ideal candidates?

- Carefully read about the program's mission, vision, values, current research, faculty, curriculum, etc.

What is the school/committee specifically asking for?

- READ the question prompts carefully and be sure to answer EVERY aspect of the prompt
- EXPLAIN how you meet the specified qualifications
- SHOW how your values/goals/aspirations match those of the organization, program, and/or school

PREPARATION: LOOKING AT YOU

- Unique attributes of your personal life story
- Your field of interest, why you chose it
- Personal success factors
- Goals (short and long term)
- What are you hoping to do with your education/award and how might it help you achieve your goal? How will it achieve the organization's goal?
- Values, interests, and skills

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH A PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Align your story with the requirements of the application.
- Capture their attention with your introduction.
- Show; don't tell.
- Explain how investing in you will pay off.
- Give yourself lots of time, revise a lot, get help.

ALIGNING YOURSELF: ARE YOU WORTHY?

As a human being, yes you are!

For this organization? Maybe?

Choose a program or award that is appropriate for you. Check with the Office of Graduate Fellowships and Awards.

LET'S PRACTICE! FINDING YOUR STORY

EVERYONE HAS AN INTERESTING STORY!!!

Typical belief:

I grew up in a really poor village in X; there's nothing interesting about my life.

Oh, really? And where are you now? How did you get here?



LET'S PRACTICE! FINDING YOUR STORY

EVERYONE HAS AN INTERESTING STORY!!!

Typical sentence:

In 2013 I completed my B.A. in Business and Finance and in 2017 I earned a master's degree in Art Therapy.

Where's the story?



CAPTURING ATTENTION: SHOW; DON'T TELL

Which one of these openings seems most **compelling**? Why?

- I was a good student in school and I have always wanted to be a teacher. I want to help students learn and grow. My goal is to foster their critical thinking abilities and to help them flourish academically...
- My name is Xue Li and I am a third-year doctoral student from China studying in the College of Education at Florida State University.
- Every morning at 10:00 a.m. I come face to face with the power of language to free; it happens in a classroom. The students I teach at Seattle Central Community College come from night work in an industrial bakery, from a Vietnamese refugee camp, from a 9-to-5 job in a car wash, or from the day care center where they've left their children...

YOUR WORTH: WHY ARE YOU A GREAT INVESTMENT?

- Most people feel uncomfortable writing personal statements because you feel like you're bragging about yourself...even Americans are uncomfortable with this!
- It is challenging to strike the right balance between your achievements and what you lack.
- Get beyond yourself: How can you help? (Your field? Others? The planet?)
- From this helping perspective: how do your skills benefit the organization? Investing in you will pay off...how?
- When you feel like a loser, return to: How can I help?

LET'S PRACTICE! HOW DO I SHOW I'M A GOOD INVESTMENT?

Which one of these statements seems most **compelling**? Why?

- Given my own particular abilities with linguistics, English, and education, I would like to contribute toward reversing the many inequalities that I have seen in K-12 education in the U.S.
- The Smith Scholarship will benefit me because it will allow me to continue my research on climate change. Even though I won a scholarship of \$5,000 last year and my parents have lent me some money, I still do not have enough funding.

LET'S PRACTICE! JI-YOUNG'S FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

The Miller Fellowship:

- Annual award for Asian female graduate students from Turkey to Japan to facilitate field research in Asia.
- Provides 6 months' support, including travel, living, health insurance, research expenses.
- Requires CV, names of 2 referees, transcripts, proof of Asian nationality, and a statement of purpose.

LET'S PRACTICE! JI-YOUNG'S FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

The statement of purpose: No more than 250 words explaining how the fellowship would contribute to the applicant's academic development. The applicant must also clearly indicate how her work will further the position of Asian women in her country upon her return home.

Ji-Young Kim: is from Korea and is looking for funding for her research back home. She is working with her advisor, Susan Grant, who has given her feedback, but Ji-Young is feeling confused. Read the drafts and Dr. Grant's comments and help Ji-Young. Is one draft better? Should she combine the two? If so, how?

BREAKING DOWN THE SOP REQUIREMENTS

- Is Ji-Young an appropriate candidate for this fellowship?
- No more than 250 words. Is that long or short?
- How will the fellowship contribute to the applicant's academic development? She wants to do research—what might the committee need to know about this?
- Clearly indicate how her work will further the position of Asian women in her country upon her return home. Is Ji-Young a good investment?

JI-YOUNG'S STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- **Version A Comments:** Not bad, Ji-Young. I think you explain your need for the fellowship quite well—indeed you might overdo it a bit. However, the main problem is that the committee will likely conclude that you haven't thought through what data you will need and how you are going to collect it. Please try again, and try to write a bit more formally.
- **Version B Comments:** Well done! This is much more professional. I like the way you offer a coherent research plan toward the end of your text. But I don't think you should suggest that going to Korea is my idea. And maybe you should put in the action research issue first, rather than presenting your personal details? One more go perhaps?

FINAL TIPS

- Break down the instructions for the statement.
- Get your information on paper (in any language) and don't edit yourself. Don't worry about word count.
- Find the details of your story (academic and/or personal) that relate to the instructions/prompt.
- How will you help others and/or the organization with your work?
- Write a first draft. Don't worry about grammar or vocabulary—focus on the information and organization. Now you can worry about the word count.
- Write a second draft—and as many drafts as you need. Once you have your story, you can correct grammar, vocabulary, sentence variety.
- Ask for help! Have others read your work and give you feedback.

RESOURCES

- **Personal Statements from Purdue's OWL:** <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/1/>
- **FSU's Career Center Info on Personal Statements:**
http://www.career.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu746/files/Writing%20a%20Personal%20Statement_0.pdf
- **Personal Statements for Fellowships from Profellow:**
<https://www.profellow.com/tips/5-powerful-personal-statement-openings-of-fellowship-winners/>
- **FSU's Office of Graduate and Fellowship Awards:** <http://ogfa.fsu.edu/>
- **Academic Phrasebank—an excellent resource for academic writing:**
<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/introducing-work/>

THANK YOU!

If you have questions, feel free to contact the International Teaching Assistant Program:

- Dr. Maria Beatriz Mendoza: mmendoza@admin.fsu.edu
- Dr. Jennifer Grill: jgrill@fsu.edu
- Visit our program: <http://cies.fsu.edu/programs/ita>