# **Personal Statements | QC Writing Center**

**What is a personal statement?**A personal statement is **a brief narrative specific to your (often intellectual and/or professional) experiences and goals**.

It’s important to **know your audience** for your personal statement because it should indicate why you’re a good match for the opportunity.

**What’s the purpose of a personal statement?**A personal statement should **confirm for the reader(s) that you’re a prepared and committed candidate**.

As such, they’re often attached to applications for jobs, studies abroad, fellowships, and graduate programs such as medical school and law school. Personal statements can take varying forms depending on the context, as in an artist’s statement or a philosophy of teaching, so it’s a good idea to **find examples pertinent to your situation**.

**A strong personal statement will:**

* Make a positive first impression
* Describe your interests in the field and how they’ve evolved
* Articulate the strengths you offer the field
* Present your goals (and indicate the relationship between the opportunity and accomplishing said goals)

**Content Tips:**

* Lead with your strong suits.
* It’s normal to write honestly and even vulnerably in a personal statement, but only write about what you’re comfortable discussing.
* Think of your lived experiences as valid indicators of preparedness for graduate study.
  + It’s okay if you’re not the typical candidate: consider how a nontraditional background may lend itself to your preparedness, commitment, or unique ability to contribute to the field.
* Don’t simply list abstract qualities you possess; give examples!
  + When providing examples, remember to *show, don’t tell*. For example, rather than saying “this experience was challenging but rewarding”, remember to explain *how*.
* Demonstrate an awareness of the opportunity to which you’re applying, such as knowledge of the program faculty or course/research opportunities.
* Provide explanations—not excuses—for any irregularities in your academic record. Indicate what you’ve done to rectify the situation and emphasize what you learned from the situation.

**Style Tips:**

* **Use the first person.** The reader(s) of your personal statement should be able to pick up on *your* voice.
* **Be yourself.** It’s okay to speak honestly about your life’s experiences and accomplishments. If you’re worried you’re coming off as self-aggrandizing or boastful, ask someone who doesn’t know your story for their honest feedback on your tone.
* **Avoid cliches** and overused phrases like “It’s always been my goal to X!” and “Y is my life’s passion!”
* **Respect any formatting specs** you’re given, such as word count.

**Ready to Get Started?**

* **Reflect** on your skills, talents, and values. Don’t forget your goals, too!
  + Try answering these questions: Who are you (as a scholar, as a professional, as a person)? What matters most to you? How do you know?
* **Brainstorm** your most profound and impactful experiences.
  + Try categorizing them by “academic,” “professional,” and “personal”.
* **Identify** connections**.** 
  + How have your skills (talents, values, etc.) shown up in your experiences? Conversely, how have your experiences shaped or confirmed who you are?
  + There’s likely a story here, perhaps in one or two key events. Consider infusing these into your personal statement.