

Writing the Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose should convince the selection committee that your studies and experiences have prepared you for your graduate career. It should be both personal and intellectually rigorous, showing your future professors that you have strong interest in the department's field of study. It is important that you elaborate on your research interests and on your future projects especially if you are a PhD applicant.

Part 1: Introduce yourself, your interests and motivations (short paragraph).

Tell the committee what you are interested in, and perhaps, what sparked your desire for graduate study. **This should be short and to the point; do not spend a great deal of time on autobiography.**

Part 2: Summarize your undergraduate and previous graduate (if applicable) career.

- a. Research you conducted. Indicate with whom, the title of the project, what your responsibilities were, and the outcome. Write technically, or in the style of your discipline. Professors are the people who read these statements.
- b. Important paper or thesis project you completed, as well as anything scholarly beyond your curricular requirements.
- c. Work experience, especially if you had any kind of responsibility for testing, designing, researching or interning in an area similar to what you wish to study in graduate school.

Part 3: Elaborate on your academic interests (ample paragraph).

Indicate what you would like to study in graduate school in enough detail to convince the faculty that you understand the scope of research in their discipline, and are engaged with current research themes.

- a. Indicate the area of your interests. Ideally, pose a question, define a problem, or indicate a theme that you would like to address, and questions that arise from contemporary research.
- b. Look on the web for information about departments you are interested in, including professors and their research. Are there professors whose research interest parallels yours? If so, indicate this. Check the specific program; many may require you to name a professor or professors with whom you might work.**
- c. End your statement in a positive manner, indicating your excitement and readiness for the challenges ahead of you.

Essential tips

- a. **Be aware of the departmental curriculum and focus** and do not state your interests lie elsewhere (for example, if you are applying to a department which has a strong emphasis on literature and culture, do not emphasize exclusively your love for the French language).
- b. If there is something important that happened to you that affected your grades, such financial need, illness or excessive work, state it.** Write it affirmatively, showing your perseverance despite obstacles. You can elaborate more in your personal statement.
- c. Be concise;** an ideal essay should say everything it needs to with brevity. Approximately 800-1000 well selected words (1-2 single space pages in 12 pt. font) are the expected length.