

What should I include in my Statement of Purpose?

The answer is quite simple: Include what you want the members of the Admissions Committee to know about you that is not otherwise clear from other documents in your file. It is an opportunity to highlight what makes you special and the reasons why they want you in the program.

Here is a list of specific examples that may be important to include in your Statement of Purpose. This list is neither exhaustive nor mandatory. This is not a checklist, but rather a guideline to help you formulate your statement into the best possible document.

Purpose

- Demonstrate the reasons why you want to attend graduate school
- How have you prepared for graduate school?
- Why do you want to attend this particular graduate program? (Curriculum, location, professors etc.)

Academic

- Any graduate or other advanced college work? Any graduate degrees? Double majors? Significant minor? Trends in your grades?
 - When explaining bad grades, be concise. This is an important place to explain your academic history, positively or negatively, but you don't want to devote too much space to your shortcomings.
- Keep it relevant! Mention advanced coursework and research that directly applies to your interest in the program.

Demographic and Diversity Factors

- Are there any special circumstances regarding your age, gender, race or ethnicity?
- Do you have significant multicultural experiences? Did you grow up in a low-income community with limited resources?
- Is English your first language? What language did your parents speak at home?
- What was your parents' and grandparents' educational level? How does your family background influence you?

Work Experience

- What type of work have you done? Mention experience that directly applies to your professional or academic interests.
 - Unless **EXTREMELY** relevant, do not include high school or significantly outdated work experience
- How did your work influence your decision to go to graduate school?

Leadership and Extracurricular Accomplishments

- Undergraduate or graduate leadership activities? Community activities and leadership? Volunteer activities?
- Academic leadership and organizations?
- Travel? Living Abroad?

Accomplishments, Special Skills and Talents

- Research papers, unique talents, relevant skills, etc.
- Have you overcome substantial discrimination or helped in overcoming discrimination against others?
- Have you served under-served communities or people?

Evidence Supporting Character and Fitness, Personal Qualities

- Can you provide examples that illustrate your integrity, maturity, honesty or compassion?
- Do you exercise good judgement, wrong motivation, perseverance, or tenacity?

Skills and Abilities

- Can you illustrate your strength in communication, planning, analytical, advocacy, problem solving or other relevant skills?

Remember that your statement must be absolutely flawless! If there are errors or grammatical mistakes, that will speak volumes about your writing skills. Try to stay within the suggested word count or page limit. Remember, you want to be thorough, but concise.

Good luck!

MPP Statement of Purpose Tips

1. What is a Statement of Purpose?

A Statement of Purpose is how you tell the admissions committee who you are, why you want to join our program, your professional interests and what you plan to do. It should answer the following:

- What do you want to study at graduate school?
- Why do you want to study it?
- What experiences do you have in your field?
- What you plan to do with your degree once you have it?

This is your chance to show the committee what makes you stand apart from other applicants. How will your voice contribute to the community of our program? How will you take what you learn to better change the world?

2. Starting the SOP

- **Start Early.** This document should shape your other application materials, and will help your letter writers write you a stronger letter.
- Do some research first – visit websites, read brochures, find faculty in your area of interest. Do not apply to programs that do not align with your interests.
- Write your resume first. Your SOP is not a repetition of your resume. Use your resume as a reference and highlight things you have learned.
- Think of why you want to go to graduate school and write down the reasons. Think of your goals and aspirations. Why do your interests matter?
- Make a list of relevant events that had a significant impact on your decision to go to graduate school.
- Go through your resume and think of what you have learned through the various experiences. Pick one or two experiences and write about them.
- Write **multiple** drafts!

3. Editing

- **Proofread!** Use your spell check. Check for grammatical errors. This document must be flawless!
- Have friends/colleagues read your Statement and ask them what they think.
- Is there a logical and smooth flow of ideas? Does each paragraph smoothly transition to the next?
- Does each paragraph bring home a central idea and contribute to the overall feeling you are trying to affect in your essay?
- Are the paragraphs in proper positions?
- Are the style and language appropriate and consistent?
- Do you repeat particular words or phrases too often?

- The tone – is it unnecessarily boastful or overly modest?
- The quality of the essay – is it boring?
- Does it include superfluous information?
- Are there incidents or aspects the essay should mention?
- Look for and correct any anomalies in spacing, font, and margins.
- Should be in Times New Roman 12 point font
- **Make sure that the school and program mentioned in the essay are correct. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.**

4. How long is a Statement of Purpose?

A good length is about 3 pages. A maximum of 5.

5. The Admissions Committee members will evaluate the following:

- Your writing ability
- How well you have conceptualized your plans for graduate school
- How well your interests and strengths match our program
- Your unique voice and sense of purpose

Remember, admissions committees read HUNDREDS of applications each year. You want your statement to grab their attention quickly and carry it all the way to the end. This is the only document, in many cases, where you will be able to express yourself: Do not squander the opportunity!