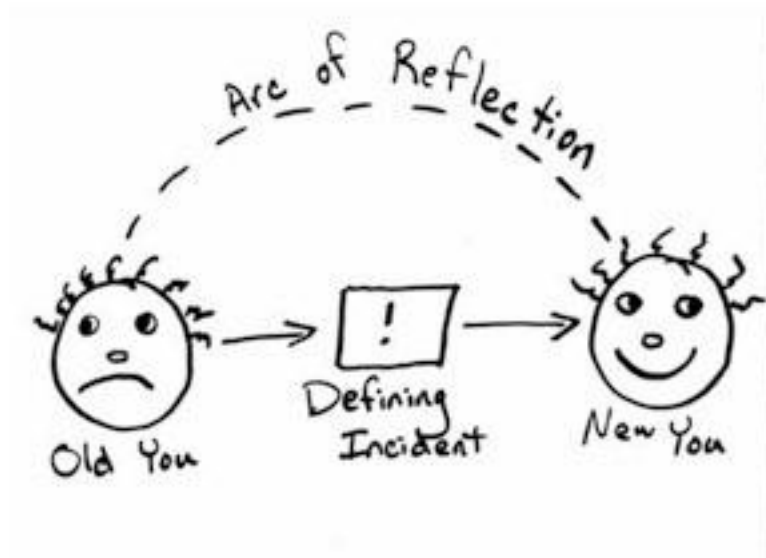


Writing the Personal Statement

Personal Statement: This 1-page narrative is designed to give the reviewers a picture of you as an individual. It is an opportunity to tell the committee more about the trajectory that you have followed and what plans you have for the future. Whereas the Statement of Grant Purpose focuses on what you will be doing in the host country, the Personal Statement concentrates on how your background has influenced your development and how that relates to the Fulbright opportunity.

The statement can deal with your personal history, family background, intellectual development, and the educational, professional, or cultural opportunities to which you have been exposed; explain their impact. This should not be a reiteration of facts already listed in the Biographical Data sections or an elaboration of the Statement of Grant Purpose.

Tell the story only you can tell. If somebody else could have written your essay for you, it's not personal enough. If you want to grab hold of the person who has to read tons of these essays, the price is that you **MUST** reveal something personal.



from <http://chewychunks.wordpress.com/2011/10/14/sample-personal-statement/>

Questions to ask yourself before you write a personal statement:

- What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for this grant—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the selection committee to be interested in you?

General advice about writing a personal statement

Tell a story

- Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is to bore the selection committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack. If you distinguish yourself through your story, you will make yourself memorable.

Be specific

- Don't, for example, state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up with specific reasons. Your desire to become a lawyer, engineer, or whatever should be logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement. Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your story.

Find an angle

- If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

- The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell what you know

- The middle section of your essay might detail your interest and experience in your particular field, as well as some of your knowledge of the field. Too many people graduate with little or no knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the profession or field they hope to enter. Be as specific as you can in relating what you know about the field and use the language professionals use in conveying this information. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're suited to it. Since you will have to select what you include in your statement, the choices you make are often an indication of your judgment.

Don't include some subjects

- There are certain things best left out of personal statements. For example, references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier are generally not a good idea. Don't mention potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political issues).

Write well and correctly

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully. Adhere to stated word or page limits.

Avoid clichés – A medical school applicant who writes that he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought. Stay away from often-repeated or tired statements.

Personal Statement: Top 10 Rules and Pitfalls

Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Rules

- Strive for depth rather than breadth. Narrow focus to one or two key themes, ideas or experiences
- Try to tell the reader something that no other applicant will be able to say
- Provide the reader with insight into what drives you
- Be yourself, not the 'ideal' applicant
- Get creative and imaginative in the opening remarks, but make sure it's something that no one else could write
- Address the funder's unique features that interest you
- Focus on the affirmative in the personal statement
- Evaluate experiences, rather than describe them
- Proofread carefully for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style
- Use readable fonts, typeface, and conventional spacing and margins

Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Pitfalls

- Do not submit an expository resume; avoid repeating information found elsewhere on the application
- Do not complain or whine about the "system" or circumstances in your life
- Do not preach to your reader. You can express opinions, but do not come across as fanatical or extreme
- Do not talk about money as a motivator
- Do not discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates to it
- Do not use boring clichéd intros or conclusions
 - "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is..."
 - "This question asks me to discuss..."
 - "I would like to thank the admissions committee for considering my application."
 - "It is my sincere hope that you will grant me the opportunity to attend your fine school."
 - "In sum, there are three reasons why you should admit me..."
- Do not use unconventional and gimmicky formats and packages
- Do not submit supplemental materials unless they are requested
- Do not get the name of the funder wrong (Fulbright – ONE "l" ☺)
- Do not incorporate technical language or very uncommon words

From <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/04/>