

Tips For Writing a Personal Statement

Getting Started

The introduction should clarify the central theme of your essay and set up the overall coherence of subject matter. Your essay should be personable yet professional in tone. Consider your audience—a scholarship committee comprised of faculty and advisors.

Follow the Essay Guidelines

Always follow the guidelines for the scholarship you are applying for, but generally, your ‘Statement of Purpose’ should be written in essay format, one page, standard margins and font, typed, single-spaced or double-spaced.

Address the Assigned Question

Example: Explain why you chose your study abroad program and how participating in this program will contribute to your academic, personal and professional goals.

Be Concrete and Specific

Use the questions below to develop specific examples and illustrations for your essay:

- What are your educational goals for study abroad?
- What attracted you academically to this particular program?
- Briefly describe how the courses/program complements your studies at UC (credit for your major, minor, general education (GE), or breadth requirements, and/or academic work outside your major field of study).
- How will completing this coursework abroad differ from completing it on campus?
- What are your personal goals for study abroad? Describe any relevant political, cultural or social issues that interest you at home and in the host country.
- Which of your interests or life experiences influenced your choice of country?
- How does the program tie in with your future ambitions? Consider academic, personal, and professional goals.

Revision strategies and tips

- Take the most cogent one-sentence summary of your argument (often in the conclusion) and move it to the front.
- Highlighter Test: highlight main ideas, literally, to test their sequence and support.
- Avoid the “what I did with my life” approach. The personal statement is not an autobiography. Instead of recounting your entire life up until this point, select specific facts and events to represent trends or traits that make you a stand-out candidate and arrange strategically instead of chronologically.
- Avoid conventional (i.e. clichéd) approaches: “I’ve always wanted to go to X ever since I was little.”
- Vary your sentences in grammatical structure, rhythm, and length. Particularly take care to avoid beginning every sentence with “I.” Doing this creates an impression of egotism or narrow preoccupation with self.
- Omit introductory clauses, such as “I believe,” “I feel,” “I think,” or “I have found in my experience that . . .” In personal statements, we assume that readers express their own ideas and experiences.
- Avoid colorless verbs. Active verbs create a stronger impression than “to be” verbs or passive constructions.
- Avoid vague and uninformative language: To clarify your meaning, choose concrete and precise language and use development methods like description, explanation, illustration, definition or narration of a specific incident. Don’t use the following words without specific development:

Significant	Remarkable	Incredible	Satisfying	Valuable	Useful	Amazing
Stimulating	Interesting	Challenging	Gratifying	Important	Meaningful	Helpful
Appealing	Exciting	Fascinating	Enjoyable	Invaluable	Insightful	Attractive
Experience						

Proofread

Proofread carefully. Avoid bad grammar and poor spelling. Do not rely on spellcheck. Try reading your essay aloud to spot the awkward sections. Strive for a professional appearance in your statement: no typographical errors, attention to format and printing as well as content. Be sure to spend time reviewing your essay for clarity.

The Student the Writing HUB (<https://writinghub.ucsd.edu>; Geisel Library, 1st Floor) is available.