

Career Statement Do's and Don'ts

A Career Statement is much like a Personal Statement in tone. Adapt the ideas below to help you write an effective one. Remember, your Career Statement should consist of several well worded paragraphs that state your educational and career goals (ie. program(s), institution and occupation you plan to pursue, and what prompted you to follow this path). ***Note*** - do NOT exceed one page in length.

DO

- You cannot tell them everything. Have a few main points you want to get across, and let them find out the rest of your story in your resume, interview, letters of recommendation, and other elements of your application.
- When you decide on the main points and stories you want to tell, answer these questions: What is the point of the story you are telling? What do you need to include to tell it well? What isn't necessary?
- Remember your high school English teacher's advice of "show don't tell." Do not tell them that you are enthusiastic or passionate about a topic; tell them a story that shows your enthusiasm and passion.
- Include anecdotes of life-changing moments, or moments that clarified and crystallized what you want to do.
- The first paragraph is vitally important. It sets tone and direction of the rest of the essay, and provides quick personal insights. The conclusion should pull the essay together, but also point to the future and indicate how the themes developed throughout the essay will continue to develop. Give the committee a sense of how this opportunity will impact you in the long-term, and what the link is between your personal statement and proposed program of study
- Be authentic, accurate, and honest.
- Give yourself lots of time to experiment and prepare many, many drafts, and perhaps even wholly different versions. Your first few drafts are likely to be awful. That's ok. Don't be afraid to be terrible. The important thing is to get your ideas down on paper, then dress them up later.
- Think about how this fits in with the flow of your application – how does it mesh with your letters of recommendation? Your transcript?

DON'T

- Don't be flowery in your prose
 - Don't refer to me/I too many times
 - Don't use this as a resume in narrative form. You should only talk about those accomplishments that are directly germane to the subject at hand. Let them find out about your other activities through the other elements of your application.
 - Only write about traumatic events if they are crucial to understanding your topic to be studied or to your theme. If you are writing about trauma, try to treat these moments with some distance. Talk more about how you overcame the challenge.
- In the end, every personal statement I have read that I thought was truly exceptional had one thing in common: when I finished reading it, I thought, "I'd like to meet this person. I'd like to take this student out for a cup of coffee and learn more." An effective personal statement tells the reader what makes you different from everyone else in the applicant pool, and does so while utilizing engaging, interesting, and concise prose.