

Tips for Writing a Graduate Statement of Purpose

Graduate school is all about you.

Get to the point and tell the reader what they need to know. The Statement of Purpose (SOP) required of most graduate programs is your chance to put some details behind your important resume bullet points and bring your experience and goals to life.



The SOP should tell the reader what motivates you to take post graduate study at this time, what are your clear academic and career goals and what you have done to prepare for success as a post graduate and beyond.

Usually the school or department admissions and/or a professor will read your SOP. Given the length of most SOP's and other graduate school essays, it is critical that the information you share in your essay gets to the point, is all about you and is entirely relevant to your study plans and career goals.

Getting into a really great graduate or PhD program is highly competitive and an investment in your future. Consider reaching out for some help with your admission strategy or to get your SOP and essays edited by a professional. Make your graduate or PhD application strong and get admitted to the best school possible!

Use these tips to get started with your graduate SOP:

1. Tell your own story

Admissions officers want to know about **you** so make it **personal**. They have a sixth sense about essay writers who are authentic and tell their own story. You will score extra points for reflecting honestly about your experiences and goals. Make sure they find out who you are, what you have done and what you think. They will also want to understand why you are a good fit for the program you are applying for.

2. Does my SOP or essay answer the question?

Review your essays to see if you have answered these questions for the reader: Why do I want to pursue this field? Why am I a good fit for this field? How have I grown professionally from my education and experience? Why do I want to attend this school or program?

Do not just copy and paste your SOP to answer questions that may look the same. Sometimes the question asked will not match the tone or style of your SOP so you need to carefully modify your master SOP and make it fit the question.

Transform your graduate or PhD application from average to outstanding

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3. Keep it recent

Avoid a step-by-step, incident-by-incident recounting of events in your life. (First I did this, then I did that, then I did that...) Unless you need to discuss something highly significant that started when you were a child, avoid the cliché introductory paragraph that refers back to an earlier time in your life. Sentences such as: "I have known that I wanted to do this since I was ___ years old." or "When I was just a child..." are just wrong and are sure to turn the reader off.

4. Real experience, honest experience

Were you really the best intern in the history of that bank? In the one-month that you were an intern did you really break all sales records and the CEO of the company came down personally to your new corner office to bid you good-bye when you left? These examples sound extreme but they represent some of the exaggerations that I have read in SOP's.

Everyone knows what interns and lab assistant's do so do not make things seem anything more than they are. Most important is that you learned something from the experience like how to work, how to cooperate with others and the chance to confirm your academic and career goals.

5. Discuss your flaws properly

Life has its ups and downs and some of the most capable people are those who have had both successes and failures. If you have had a serious failure that you overcame or an obvious flaw in your academic record that you need to explain then you should discuss it in your essay. Do not make excuses; explain what happened, what you did to overcome the problem and what you possibly learned from it.

6. Avoid the passive voice

Avoid the passive voice (search this online to know what it means). In your essay you should discuss past experiences and how those might support your future goals at college. Admissions want to know where you have been and also where you are going. Talking about the past is very important but college is about your future. Make sure you discuss your past experience and preparation for future academic and even career goals.

7. Use everyday plain and simple English

It is tempting to try to use high-level English words to impress admissions but this is a mistake that can hurt your application. You do not want the reader to keep looking up words in a dictionary and losing focus. Keep it simple and easy to read, otherwise the reader will become distracted and your message will be lost.

Keep the tone professional, yet conversational. Do not use contractions or slang. Avoid clichés.

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8. Proofread Your Work

Forgot spill chuck! You need to proofread your work and eliminate mistakes that come from auto-correct. Print out your essay and read it again. Get a friend to read your work too, and then another friend. Invest in getting a professional admissions essay editor to review your work and make it stronger. First impressions are lasting impressions. Spelling and grammar mistakes will be the kiss of death when trying to impress admissions.

9. Avoid sensitive or offensive topics

You never know who is reading your essay so try to avoid controversial or sensitive topics about terrorism, politics, religion, cultural differences and so on. Your goal is to get admitted and nothing else. It is possible that your opinions might turn off or offend the reader and get you dumped onto the 'no pile'. Play it safe and keep in neutral.

10. Don't scare the reader

Avoid long paragraphs that look daunting. Paragraphs should be 4-5 sentences long and connect/flow smoothly. Get to the point and keep the attention of the reader right to the end. If they do not read your work they cannot evaluate you. Don't bore them!

Addmitto is College Admissions Made Easy™



Your grades and test scores are already fixed so the only part of the application that you have any control over is your SOP and other essays. Get some help with topics and telling your story with a full service coaching package or use our hourly editing services to get your essays just right.

About Addmitto

ADDMITTO was founded to help undergraduate applicants structure their experience and goals in a way that highlights their strengths, deals with their weak points and sets them apart from other applicants through their college admission essays and interviews.

Take an admission coaching session with us on Skype to discuss your admission strategy, choose admission essay topics or to get some help smoothing over the rough spots in your application. Stand out from other applicants by getting your essays edited and restructured to leave a more solid impact on the reader. An interview preparation session will help you to master the art of the interview and practice for the main event, helping you gain even more of an edge over your competition.

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