The Personal Statement: What is it?
A personal statement is a chance to provide a glimpse of who you are, to humanize yourself as an applicant. Among the standardized test scores and other quantitative measures utilized in an admissions process, the personal statement is your opportunity to become REAL to those reviewing your application. Graduate and professional schools will use this document to answer key questions during the admissions process:

→ How self-aware if this individual about what motivates and drives them?
→ Once the individual’s mountain is identified, how hard have they worked to climb it already?
→ What qualities do they possess that are of value to this program, institution, and career field?
→ Do we believe they are a fit for this profession and should pursue this above all other options?
→ Can we envision this person being our colleague in ten years?
→ Was the writing engaging enough that now we want to talk to this candidate in person?

Getting Started
The first sentence can often be the hardest. Stop, breathe, and begin. Try one of these strategies:

→ Make a Life Timeline: outline your life in chronological order. Include anything that is important to you, from running a marathon to conducting research with faculty.
→ Free Write: sit down and start writing. Don’t worry about if it is “good”, just write.

Framework for Success
Be your own narrator: tell a story. Provide examples. Don’t list experiences, make MEANING of them. Discuss what life events brought you to this decision, the experiences that confirmed it for you, and if you have yet encountered the challenging realities of this pursuit.

Demonstrate what makes you singular: what do you most want others to know about you? Consider this personal statement a first impression, an introduction to you as a human being. Contemplate the following elements of yourself:

Knowledge   Experience   Abilities   Capabilities   Character

Write intuitively: gaining the perspectives of others is important, but remember that it is your voice that needs to be on display. The manner in which you write should come naturally to you and feel authentic.

Don’t tell them ten things, tell them one thing powerfully: strive for depth over breadth by focusing on a few key ideas. Don’t be afraid to put your head AND your heart into this.

Edit, review, and find support EARLY: Expect and appreciate multiple drafts. When considering who to ask to review your statement, utilize different points of view. Ask three individuals who each bring a different lens to their edits to review your statement.

→ The first should be a Writing Champion and help with grammar, flow of content, structure
→ The second should be an Industry Guru, someone knowledge of trends in your intended field
→ The third should be a Strategic Toolkit and provide insights into the tactics of a selection process
PERSONAL STATEMENT BASICS

Additional Resources:

Purdue OWL: Writing the Personal Statement
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign: The Center for Writing Studies
http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/personalstatement/

Carnegie Mellon University: Health Professions Program
http://www.cmu.edu/hpp/apply-to-schools/personal-statements/tips.html

Purdue University: Pre-Professional Advising
http://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional/currentStudents/statement.html

More questions? We can help! (740)587-6656 or career@denison.edu