**Statement of Purpose**

**What is the difference between a Statement of Purpose and a Personal Statement?**

The Statement of Purpose:

* Discusses what you want to accomplish by means of the professional training a graduate program provides.
* Talks about the kinds of research you've done in the past, specific research interests for future projects, and how you are prepared or plan to prepare yourself to do that research.
* Introduces your pedagogical interests and how you are prepared, or plan to prepare yourself, to teach.

A Personal Statement talks about motivation and self-discipline. For more on this, see the writing center's handout on the [Personal Statement](http://www.ou.edu/writingcenter/guides/professional_writing/personal_statements.html).

As a general rule, you will be writing a Personal Statement for some programs and a statement of purpose for others. Some might ask for both, but others, particularly some graduate programs, will ask for your Statement of Purpose only.

FIGURE OUT WHAT YOUR PURPOSE IS

It’s important to determine exactly what the purpose of your statement of purpose is. Generally, it will be an attempt to persuade an applications committee that they should choose you for whatever it is you are applying experience qualifies you for the position. Thus, you should consider questions such as, what do you have to contribute to this field? Why are you the best fit for this program, and vice versa? How have you already been performing professionally in the field to this point?

Pay attention to your audience (the committee) throughout the statement. Remember, your audience is made up of faculty members who are experts in their field. They want to know that you can think as much as what you think.

TIPS FOR WRITING THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. Avoid writing that you want to do something because you “love it” or writing about what you “did with your life.” Instead, show your commitment to the field by discussing why this work is so fulfilling (and thus why you will complete your degree and the program should invest in you).
2. Write directly and in a straightforward manner that tells about your experience and what it means to you. Avoid using personal experiences that are unrelated to the field you want to enter or your research interests/experience in it.
3. But, do not use "academies" or jargon, and don’t fill up with fluff. Remember the committee has a lot of these to read, and fluff and jargon won’t distinguish you from the piles of applications on their desks.
4. Be specific. Document yours conclusions with specific instances or draw your conclusions as the result of individual experience.
5. Stick to the page limit. It is likely the committee that reviews your statement of purpose is reading hundreds if not thousands of them, so don’t give them any more than they want to read.
6. Do your research. Towards the end of your statement, you will need a section that explains why you want to go to the school you are applying to in particular. This will require you to show that you have researched the school enough to know which professors you would like to work with and how the program can benefit you. Use this section to show how you and the program are a good fit.
7. If you are using applying to many schools, then make sure this paragraph fits neatly into the template you are using for all the schools. Furthermore, make note of differences in requirements (i.e., don’t use the same 300 word statement for a school that allows 1500), and be sure you have met them all for each school before copy and pasting. This may mean revising some of your statements and just swapping out your paragraph about the school in others.
8. Always proofread carefully and have others check your work. It’s a good idea not only to have friends and writing center consultants look at it but your trusted advisors as well. They may have served on a committee and can help you to put your best foot forward.
9. Avoid unqualified statements. See list of phrases to avoid below.