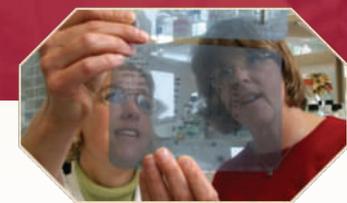




INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

GRADUATE STUDY IN INDIANAPOLIS



What To Do—

Personal Statements and Letters of Recommendation

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Follow the program instructions for writing a statement. Some programs require that you answer specific questions and keep your statement to a certain number of pages or words.

Do your research about the program, school, and university you are applying to! Know why you want to apply to the specific program at University Y and share these reasons in your statement.

Paint a picture of yourself as a person, student, and future ___ (fill in profession). Demonstrate who you are and why, as well as whom you want to be and what you have done, and what you are doing to make it happen. This should be your story so be yourself!

Show confidence and passion. Good statements are sincere, succinct and state your core interests, experiences, and career goals.

Demonstrate your deep understanding of the field. The admissions committee will want evidence of your potential to succeed academically and you have an innate curiosity in the field. If you did a research project, what was the hypothesis (rather than the details)? Why is this broadly important? Show them that you understand in a real and practical way what the program and the subsequent career are all about.

Self reflection is critical to writing a strong statement. What has brought you to this point in your life? Why do you want to pursue a graduate or professional degree? What have you done to lay the foundation for moving forward in this field? What are your career goals?



Explain why this program is the logical next step in your story. Why are you and Program X a good fit?

Explain inconsistencies in your academic history or path. Address any deficiencies in your academic record and/or deviations in your career path but don't dwell on this.

Explain your long term career goals. Ensure your goals match your proposed educational path!

Proof and revise it over and over... Ask those you trust to read and offer suggestions, but stay true to your own words and intent.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Pick your letter writers carefully. Most admissions committees want to hear from instructors, faculty mentors, advisors, etc. who can attest to your academic abilities and the likelihood of you being a successful student. Supervisors in employment positions that are relevant to the program that you are applying to are also acceptable. Make it easy for your letter writers – give them a list of your applications with deadlines and email addresses, give them a resume or CV, give them a copy of your statement, remind them of the dates that you took their classes, etc.

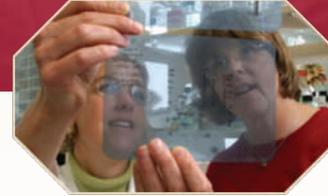
Stay in touch with those you would like to author your letters. You should make sure that those you are asking to write your letters are aware of your plans for graduate / professional school, your career goals, and all that you have done to lay the foundation for your path.

<http://grad.medicine.iu.edu/IBMG>



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
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Don't



What Not To Do—
Personal Statements and Letters of Recommendation

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Do not write a narrative version of your resume or CV. You should show the admissions committee that you understand in a real and practical way what the program and the subsequent career are all about, and that you have demonstrated adequate preparation and have the skills and determination to be successful.

Do not use the same statement for all applications. You should speak directly to the specific admissions committee that you are submitting the statement to. You have to prove that their program is a fit for you. Customize it!

This is not your diary. Although you want to share insight into your life and your decision to pursue this degree, your statement should remain professional.

Avoid clichés or overusing your thesaurus. Be sincere and do not use ready-made phrases such as “I want to help people”, or uncommon words that seem contrived.

Do not broach controversial subjects. Speaking about religion or politics can turn off the admissions committee unless those topics are relevant to the program content.

Money should not be a motivator in your statement. The reality is that money may be factored into your decision to go to graduate or professional school; however, you should probably not mention it in your personal statement.

This is not a plea. Do not turn on the used car sales pitch. You want the committee to be interested in you enough to invite you to an interview, not to be turned off by a hard sale.

Do not complain about your life situation. It is okay to explain hardships that shaped who you are; however, try to keep your statement as positive as possible.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Do not ask your neighbor, coach, priest, or peer student to author a letter of recommendation. These people may know you well on a personal level, but more than likely do not know you on an academic level. Exception: letter writers that are logical choices for the program you are applying to (e.g. theology or physical education program, etc.).

Do not ask a professor or supervisor with whom you've lost contact with to author a letter. You should ask individuals who you are currently in contact with to author your letters of recommendation. They will have more to say!

Do not ask just once! Friendly reminders go a long way. This is one thing in your application that you do not have full control over; however, all letters are often required for your application to be reviewed and considered. Make it easy for your letter writers – give them a list of your applications with deadlines and email addresses, give them a resume or CV, give them a copy of your statement, remind them of the dates that you took their classes, etc.

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