

Personal Statement Worksheet

This handout mainly summarizes information from Richard Stelzer's **How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School** (Princeton, NJ: Peterson's Guides, 1989).

Use the following sets of questions to help you *generate material* that you can use when constructing your personal statement.

1. Who are you?

- a. What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?

- a. What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?

2. What is your area of interest?

- a) When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field?

- b) What insights have you gained?

- c) How have you learned about this field--through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?

3. What experience do you have? If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?

4. What are your career goals?

5. How do you explain _____? Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?

6. What have you overcome? Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?

7. What do you have to offer?

- a. What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?

- b. What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess? Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school--and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?

- c. What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

Source: East Tennessee State University Writing and Communication Center
http://www.etsu.edu/wcc/personal_statement_worksheet.htm