

WRITING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

What is a Statement of Purpose?

A Statement of Purpose, or Letter of Intent, is your personal statement about who you are, what has influenced your career so far, your professional interests and where you plan to go from here. It is your one chance to stand out from among many other well-qualified applicants. Among all the documents that are handed in during an application, it is the Statement of Purpose that is often the most important document because it brings the applicant to life. A well-written Statement of Purpose can show your creativity, skill and professionalism, and therefore can make or break the application. Admissions officers who evaluate Statements of Purpose look for attributes such as enthusiasm, honesty, capability, curiosity and most importantly *uniqueness*. Therefore, your Statement of Purpose should be unique to you and reflect your personality. It is a good idea to write several drafts before finalizing the statement.

Below is the commonly expected organization of a Statement of Purpose. Each part can consist of one or more paragraphs and the length can vary depending on the expectations of the admissions committee. Most often, the expected length is 500-600 words, 1 or 1,5 pages, single-space.

Part 1: Introduction

- Tell who you are, what you want to study, how you became interested in this field.

Part 2: Where you come from (undergraduate/graduate study)

- Mention important classes you took which stimulated your desire for graduate study, such as a specific project for a class. You may also refer to conversations with people in the field, books you have read and seminars you have attended. If you did a research, indicate with whom you did the research, the title of the project, what your responsibilities were, and the outcome.
- If you have work experience, indicate the company, work/design team, responsibilities, what you have learned, and how your work experience helped you formulate your interest.

Part 3: Where you plan to go now (study or career plans / what you want to do in a graduate school / in a new workplace)

- Indicate areas of interest. Your area of emphasis should be clearly defined before you write the statement.
- Check out the website for information about the department you intend to apply to, the faculty members and their research areas. You should define what attracts you most about the institution you are applying to, the faculty members whose fields of study are interesting to you.
- Indicate the most interesting or notable thing about yourself, why you are a match for their program, why you might be a stronger candidate for that graduate school and how you can contribute to the academic research conducted in that department, what you plan to do with the education you hope to receive. Your essay should indirectly reflect what is special, unique, impressive about you. Express your capabilities and talents through examples.

Part 4: Conclusion

- End your statement in a positive and confident manner with a readiness for the challenges of a graduate study.

Points to remember while writing a Statement of Purpose

- First and foremost, your aim is to give a clear and realistic description of yourself, your expectations, research areas and interests.
- Make your ideas meaningful by giving examples from your experiences and avoid clichés such as “I have always wanted to be a doctor because I enjoy helping people”. Do not use stock phrases already found on the internet.
- Be selective and only write about achievements relevant to your main objective.
- Write about your current expectations and fields of interest, rather than those related to the past. For instance, “I find computers intriguing because of their endless potential and what I can do with them,” would be more convincing than “Computers have fascinated me since my early childhood”.
- If you need to explain poor performance, do so in a positive manner and without making excuses. For example, if you have a poor grade on your academic record, state what affected your work and follow up with the efforts you put in to improve the situation.