

## **Included in this workbook:**

1. Top Five Tips for Writing a Personal Statement
2. A Tool for Reflection
3. Brainstorming Graphic Organizer
4. Checklist
5. Further Resources

# Top Five TIPS for Writing a Personal Statement

## 1. Be creative, but have a plan

- ★ Bring your authentic voice to differentiate yourself
- ★ Do your own writing; avoid AI-generated text
- ★ Follow your academic writing process from chaos to order
  - ☐ Read • Brainstorm • Outline • Write • Revise
  - ☐ Read • Write • Reverse Outline • Revise

## 2. Go for depth rather than breadth

- ★ Choose the greatest hits of your academics and extra-curriculars
- ★ Focus on the meaning of events and experience
- ★ What did you learn? How did you grow? What does it mean for your future?

## 3. Explore process *and* product

- ★ Write about the road to your accomplishments, not just the destination

## 4. Find the right tone

- ★ Be charming and informal but polished
- ★ Avoid jargon, clichés, and slang
- ★ Consider your audience: keep humour tame and appropriate
- ★ Avoid addressing the reader as “you”
- ★ Identify the contributions you could make to this community

## 5. Be detail-oriented and accurate

- ★ Double-check quotations and attribute properly
- ★ Check titles/spelling of individuals, institutions, and programs

## A Tool for Reflection

<b>Retell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the experience or accomplishment</li><li>• What are some key events or details?</li></ul>
<b>Relate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why did you choose this event or accomplishment?</li><li>• What does it mean to you?</li><li>• Is there a relevant academic theory, idea, professional requirement, or other abstract concept?</li><li>• What is its relevance to the application?</li></ul>
<b>Reflect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What did you learn in the process?</li><li>• What opportunities for growth did you encounter?</li><li>• Did you make any mistakes or receive feedback that helped you develop?</li><li>• How has this experience or accomplishment prepared you for the future?</li></ul> <p>★ <i>The bulk of your writing should focus on this aspect</i></p>

## The Personal Statement: A Brainstorming Graphic Organizer

### Intro

#### Application:

#### Focus and Central Question:

- Lead – joke, quotation, reference to a theory, key life event
- Brief biographical note, if applicable
- Reference to theories, ideas, philosophies, or other academic concepts
- Central thesis or guiding statement that answers the question(s) asked

### Academics

- Brief narrative of high school to undergrad and beyond
- Completed programs and degrees
- Awards and honours
- Highlights
- Meaningful learning experiences – product AND process

## Extra-Curriculars

- Meaningful experiences
- Relevance
- Greatest hits
- Learning – product AND process
- Contributions and personal gains

## Conclusion

### Focus and Central Question:

- Why should anyone care?
- What will you contribute? What will you gain?
- What are your plans, goals, and dreams?
- How will this opportunity help you to realize them?
- What can you offer to this community?

## The Personal Statement: A Checklist

Have you...

Stayed within the word count?	
Followed a coherent and conscious structure?	
Developed paragraphs of at least six to eight sentences?	
Included a single guiding sentence or thesis?	
Used <a href="#">proper sentence structure</a> ?	
Edited for content and ideas?	
Edited for style and tone?	
Edited for <a href="#">grammar and spelling</a> ?	
Covered all of the questions or suggested topics?	
Used the space primarily to reflect rather than just retell?	
Double-checked all the names and other details?	
Avoided jargon?	
Avoided slang?	
Read it aloud as you edited for coherence and clarity?	
Shared it with someone who can provide feedback?	
Booked an appointment for a review with Academic Skills?	

You are good to go!

## **Some Further Resources**

[Trent University Career Space: Info on the Personal Statement](#)

[Trent University Academic Skills: “How to Write in University”](#)

[The Purdue Owl: Guide to Personal Statements](#)

[University of Toronto - Student Life: Guide to Writing a Personal Statement](#)