

Writing the Graduate School Statement of Purpose

Your statement of purpose must convince the reader your achievements and skills show your promise as a successful future graduate student. Overall, most statement of purposes have four parts.

1. Introduce yourself, your interests, and your motivations

- What is your current career goal/objective?
- Needs to be relevant to the program you're applying.
- Goal should clearly show this is the kind of work you strive to do.

2. Highlight your undergraduate studies and career thereafter

- Explains how you became interested in this field.
- Give specific examples:
 - Research you conducted (With whom? What project? Your responsibilities?)
 - Your thesis project
- Describe your experience related to this field.
 - Emphasize key projects, Internships, employment, co-curricular activities, etc.
- Did you take a gap year? Describe what you participated in.
 - How did a gap year help prepare you for graduate school?

3. Elaborate your interests in academia, the graduate program, and plans beyond

- State your areas of interest (pose a question, talk about a project you would like to research).
- Research the professors in the program (only if applicable):
 - Indicate the professors whose research interests parallel with your own.
- Make your long-term goal and intention for your career in the field clear:
 - A committee will always choose a student who has a vision over one who does not
- Why are you a good fit for the program?
 - Why are you choosing this program over others?
- What purpose does this degree serve for you to achieve future plans?

Important details to remember:

- Use an active, positive voice, not a passive one
- Use examples to get your point across; don't say you're a determined person, *show* it
- The entire document should flow and be linked – continuity and focus
- Explain any outstanding circumstances that affected your grades
- Stay within the word limit the program gives
- Do not repeat your resume/CV, interpret it
- Always avoid clichés or gimmicks
- Polish, proofread, and peer-review!
- Use strong and vivid language whenever possible – use a thesaurus!