

Suggestions for Writing a Statement of Purpose for Grad School

Your statement of purpose should portray you as:

Passionately interested in the field: Demonstrated by opening with a "hook"

Intelligent: conveyed by the overall writing, organization, expression, etc. of your statement.

Well-prepared academically and personally: Well-prepared can be demonstrated by using the lingo of the field (theory, craft, etc.), describing the specific kinds of coursework and other accomplishments you have in the field.

Able to take on the challenges of grad school : Can be shown by describing the rigor of the work you have done.

Able to have rapport with professors and fellow grad students — in other words, collegial: Not particularly important but is nevertheless a factor — if you can show yourself as a generally nice and cooperative person, that will do — just be true to your own style.

Able to finish the graduate degree in a timely fashion: Can be conveyed implicitly by your success thus far and more explicitly if you can tell some (brief) story about adverse obstacles you have overcome.

A potentially outstanding representative of that grad school in your future career: Can be implied by your being an outstanding representative of your undergraduate school — for example, don't "bad-mouth" your current college or professors.

Exercises for a First Draft

You do not need to write detailed answers for every exercise, rather the goal is to build a pool of possible topics and points.

- What makes you unique? Different? Unusual?
- What artists, faculty or Articles have had the greatest influences on the development of your art?
- What is the single most important concept you have learned in college?
- How has your interest evolved and what specific turning points can you identify?
- What work experiences (if any) have led you to believe you want to pursue graduate education?
- How have you prepared yourself to succeed in graduate school?
- What body of relevant knowledge will you take with you?
- What personal attributes make you particularly likely to succeed in your new career?
- What is your biggest accomplishment to date?
- What are your specific postgraduate career plans?
- How will this graduate education facilitate these plans?
- What is your 5 year- goal? Your 10-year goal?

Three Maxims of Graduate School Admissions *by Don Asher*

- Fit and match trump grades
- Specificity plus flexibility leads to admission
- Capacity plus passion leads to admission