As you write your personal statement:

**DO:**
- Keep your audience in mind
- Be accurate and be yourself
- Let the reader know who you are, what motivates you, what characteristics come together to make you unique
- Use the active voice and avoid passive verbs; using "I" is to be expected in a statement that is about YOU
- Make connections between your experience and the resulting value or meaning to you
- Use specific examples to illustrate connections you have made, conclusions you have reached, and insights you have gained from your experiences
- Point out specific features of the school that attract you
- Include academic distinctions (publications, study abroad, internships) related to your goals
- Include information that puts your achievements into perspective (such as working full-time during your undergraduate education)
- Include any special skills that may make you a preferred candidate for acceptance into the program (e.g., research, computer, laboratory, foreign language skills)
- Put creativity and imagination into your opening remarks to capture the attention of the reader
- Make your point early and be sure to focus on the positive
- Follow the school's instructions TO THE LETTER
- Keep your statement concise - two pages or less (and within the word-count limit)
- Consider the personal statement a persuasive essay
- Use your conclusion to pull everything together and make a final attempt to sell yourself to the graduate program
- When it is absolutely necessary to explain shortfalls or deficiencies, consider using an addendum rather than including this in your personal statement
- Enlist others to proofread your essay for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style
- Use a highly readable font with conventional spacing and margins

**DO NOT:**
- Write your autobiography or simply reiterate information from your application or your resume
- Fall into the trap of “I’ve always wanted to be…”
- Compose a list of your achievements and personal qualities
- Generalize, lecture, whine, or present yourself as an expert in the field of study
- Pretend to be the “ideal” applicant
- Include anything that you cannot substantiate or anything that is untrue
- Talk about money as a motivating factor in your plans for the future
- Discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates directly to it
- Remind the school of its ranking among the various programs of its type
- Waste your personal statement opportunity with a silly introduction or conclusion
- Use a gimmicky style or format
- Submit supplemental materials unless the school requests them
- Get the name of the school wrong
- Use clichés and common information. Almost all applicants are intelligent, hardworking, and have a strong desire to pursue an advanced degree.
- Include high school accomplishments, as they are almost always irrelevant at this point in your professional development.
- Risk writing about a controversial topic. Consider your audience. If you feel passionate about a topic, it is certainly your right to express your feelings about it. Just be aware that your audience may not share your strong opinions.
- Address problems or weaknesses in your personal statement. Keep the personal statement positive, even if the subject is overcoming adversity.
- Disclose aspects of yourself (personal, medical, religious, etc.) which you are uncomfortable sharing.
- Use sensationalistic stories that are unrelated to your program of interest.