

Frequently Asked Questions About Personal Statements

Q. How long is a personal statement?

A. Sometimes, the graduate program will provide specific instructions regarding the length of your statement. Often, however, there will be little or no direction provided, simply a request for a statement.

A general rule of thumb you might follow is to **submit a 2-3 page statement, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt. Times New Roman font.** While there are no set rules about length or format, this is typically considered appropriate and sufficient.

Q. What should I write about?

A. A personal statement is your opportunity to tell the Admissions committee about YOU. In general, the personal statement should include an interesting story about you, your reasons for wanting to attend graduate school in this field of study, why you want to attend that particular institution, your future career goals and any relevant research or work experience. Many times, the personal statement is what really helps one candidate stand out from all the others.

Unless directed otherwise in the statement instructions, your essay should NOT discuss weaknesses or deficiencies. The statement is your time to shine; **problems may be addressed separately, in a brief addendum.** The addendum, if necessary, is a separate page where you may briefly explain any information in your application that may reflect poorly on you, such as poor grades or a low admission test score. Be sure to avoid long, tedious excuses and keep the addendum short, to the point, and as positive as possible.

Q. Can I submit the same statement to each of the programs where I apply?

A. In a word, "No." While your statement will certainly have much in common from one program to another, each version should be slightly different. Pay careful attention to the writing prompt and any length instructions provided on the application.

Whereas one program may ask you to describe your relevant coursework, another program might prefer to find that information on your transcript. In addition to differences such as these, your statement should specify why you want to attend that specific institution. These reasons might be for certain classes or specialties that are offered, for the change to work with an admired faculty, or some other motivating factor. Obviously, this will require you to submit a different essay to each program.

Q. Who at Rollins can help me with my personal statement?

A. Your advisor, a career counselor, or those who wrote recommendation letters for you may be very helpful in critiquing your writing. The **Center for Career & Life Planning** can provide guidance in many areas and, after reviewing your statement, will offer suggestions for improvement in content, organization and writing style. You may also want to seek **the advice and counsel of people in your chosen field**; as they may have specific knowledge about programs in that area. For assistance with grammar, spelling, sentence structure and other elements of the writing process, you can ask for a **[tutor from TJ's to proofread your work.](#)** Do not be surprised, however, if you get differing opinions and recommendations for your essay. In the end, only you can decide the best way of presenting yourself.

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