

# What is a Personal Statement?

*A personal statement is an extended essay about yourself. It details your interests, passions, experiences, and thoughts, and how these are connected to your long and short term academic, personal, and professional goals, with an emphasis on professional and academic goals.*

## **A personal statement IS:**

1. *A snapshot of who you are as a person.* It is an opportunity for the selection committee to get to know you.
2. *A story of your priorities and goals.* Tell the readers about a past experience that has influenced your life path. How do your experiences, your goals, and the scholarship/fellowship you are applying for interconnect?
3. *A place for anecdotes.* This is a short, descriptive, interesting story about an important event. Anecdotes are your friends in personal statement writing, and should provide context for your goals and priorities. Don't say an internship, for example, was a life-changing experience, tell us a story from the internship and how it changed your life.

## **A personal statement IS NOT:**

1. *A research paper.* A personal statement is different from academic writing. It requires more self-reflection, and less analysis of data.
2. *Your resume in narrative form or similar to a cover letter.* Do not simply repeat courses taken, internships/work that you have completed, or honors received. Readers can gather this information from your resume. Focus on telling a story of how these courses, internship, and experiences have shaped you as a person and your goals.
3. *A journal entry.* It is appropriate to draw on experiences that have influenced you as a person and have shaped your goals and priorities. However, your personal statement should not read like a diary, meaning you should share only what is relevant for context. Also, only share what you would feel comfortable discussing, in-depth, at the interview stage.
4. *A justification as to why you are the best and deserve this scholarship.* Don't get caught up trying to explain why you're the ideal candidate. Focus on telling your story, and not competing with the stories of others.
5. *A time to use cliches or pander to what you think the committee is looking for.* Be authentic. Cliches are not original thoughts. Originality and a sense of your personality is what the committee is searching for, not cliches that could likely be transferrable to any personal statement.

**Excellent website to visit for personal statement tips:**

<https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementsonline/>