Writing Personal Statements for Graduate School

Do’s, Don’ts, and Brainstorming Your Message (Followed by Group Brainstorming)
What is a Personal Statement?
General Objectives of the Personal Statement

● Convince readers -- the faculty members on the selection committee -- that you have solid experience, achievements, and qualities that demonstrate you are a promising candidate for graduate study.
DON'T SWEAT: WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU SO, YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE THIS...
AS YOU DRAFT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENTS, ALWAYS REMEMBER:

You is kind, you is smart, you is important.
Also Remember: Writing is a PROCESS

Success

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like
Qualities of the “Ideal” Candidate...
Shows a Strong Desire to LEARN
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- Faculty are looking for students who show they want to come to graduate school “to learn rather than get good grades.”
  - In part, graduate school is an opportunity for you to develop your knowledge of the current evidence base in the field and develop necessary skills for parsing through literature, in the future, to find the evidence that supports best practices in the field.
Shows a Strong Desire to LEARN

General Tip for the Personal Statement:

- **DO** demonstrate you are **eager to learn about the current evidence base** (i.e., external research evidence) in the field, a particular area of the field that especially interests you or both.
Understands the Importance of Research in Everyday Clinical Practice
Evidence-Based Practice: Patient/Client/Caregiver Perspectives
Evidence-Based Practice: Clinical Expertise/Expert Opinion
Evidence-Based Practice:
External Scientific Evidence
Understands the Importance of Research in Everyday Clinical Practice

- Admissions committees are looking for students who:
  - Show they understand and value evidence-based practice (EBP)
  - Show an interest in wanting to understand and apply research science to the field (e.g., clinical practice)
Understands the Importance of Research: in Everyday Clinical Practice

General Tip for the Statement of Purpose:

- **DO NOT** say you want to pursue graduate school or the field so you can “help people reach their fullest potential.”
- **DO** show that you are eager to explore scientific literature and apply findings from the evidence base to making informed clinical decisions for the clients and families you serve.
Want to Learn More About Evidence-Based Practice?

- Visit the following links within ASHA.org to help you get started:
  - [http://www.asha.org/CE/for-providers/Evidence-Based-Practice-CE-Providers/](http://www.asha.org/CE/for-providers/Evidence-Based-Practice-CE-Providers/)

- Visit with professors, graduate students, and clinicians -- to develop additional insight on the importance of EBP and resources you can access to gain more understanding of EBP.
Understands Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are
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- Faculty want to know about your specific interests in the field.
  - As you discuss your academic and professional interests, you need to demonstrate your understanding of the current literature in the area(s) that interest you.
  - Ideally you should express your desire to help fill the gaps in the literature on your topic(s) of interest.
How Can I Learn About Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are?

- Read recent research studies on your topic of interest:
  - “Voluntary stuttering is a strategy that has been suggested for use in the clinical literature but has minimal empirical data regarding treatment outcomes.”
How Can I Learn About Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are?

- You can find recent articles from ASHA journals on your areas of interest:
  - American Journal for Audiology
  - American Journal for Speech-Language Pathology
  - Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research
  - Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools
  - SIG Perspectives
How Can I Learn About Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are?

● Visit the following website to access ASHA publications:
  ○ http://www.asha.org/publications/

General Tip

● Consult with a UT librarian to find ASHA publications on your specific topic of interest.
  ○ http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
How Can I Learn About Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are?

- Find articles recently published by professors whom you would like to study under in graduate school:
  - Faculty Biographies: [http://csd.utexas.edu/faculty](http://csd.utexas.edu/faculty)
  - Laboratory Links: [http://csd.utexas.edu/research](http://csd.utexas.edu/research)
Understands Where the Field Is and Where the Gaps in Knowledge Are

● General Tips for the Personal Statement:
  ○ **DO** make sure there are faculty members in your prospective program who specialize in your proposed area of interest within the field.
Know Their Goals and
How They Are Going to Get There

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?
Know Their Goals and How They Are Going to Get There

PLAN = GOAL

You can only reach your goal if you plan
Know Their Goals and How They Are Going to Get There

- **General Tips for the Personal Statement:**
  - **Do** write about how your prospective program will help you meet your academic and career objectives.
    - **Involvement in a lab’s research projects?**
      [https://moody.utexas.edu/aphasialab](https://moody.utexas.edu/aphasialab)
    - **Involvement in a training grant program?**
Know Their Goals and How They Are Going to Get There

- General Tips for the Personal Statement:
  - **Do** write about specific clinical experiences you plan on pursuing inside and outside of your university clinic to meet your long-term and short-term goals.
  - *Think about potential university clinic experiences, study-abroad clinical experiences, externships within the city of your prospective program, and clinical fellowships.*
Any specific clinical experiences you plan on pursuing to achieve your goals?
Any specific clinical experiences you plan on pursuing to achieve your goals?
Know How Their Prospective Program is Going to Help Them Achieve Their Goals

- General Tip for Writing the Statement of Purpose:
  - **DO NOT** write that you think UT has a great program for you to gain an in-depth understanding of X -- when no faculty member in the program specializes in the study of X.
  - Shows you have not done your research on what UT has to offer and that your interests and the program’s interests do not fit together.
Know How Their Prospective Program is Going to Help Them Achieve Their Goals

- Apply to schools that have faculty who study what you are interested in pursuing as a career.
  - **This is Me:** I am interested in studying X, filling gaps in literature on X, and applying knowledge of X to clinical practices.
  - **This is You:** Professor Awesome studies X or something very similar to X.
  - **This is How We Fit Together:** I can help Professor Awesome with his research on X, so I can further my short-term and long-term goals.
Know How Their Prospective Program is Going to Help Them Achieve Their Goals

- Gain information on the expertise and areas of study of the academic and clinical faculty.

- Gain information on special training grant programs or clinical experiences offered by the program.
SEGWAY!
Specific Personal Statement Tips for PhD and AuD Applications

Some questions to you will likely address with your statement:

- What faculty member do you want to work with?
- Why do you want to work with that faculty member?
- How does your proposed area of study align with current work a faculty member is conducting?
- Discuss your research experience and how that has prepared you to work in someone’s lab.
Personal Statement Tips for MA/MS SLP Applications

- Questions you address in your statements will depend upon your prompts.
  - Be sure to address all questions asked of you in your prompt.
- Avoid using often-repeated statements.
- Be very specific when writing about your research and clinical interests.
- Make sure the program has faculty who study what you are interested in pursuing as a research project and a clinical career.
Any Questions?
Brainstorming Exercise

Goal: To help you develop content for the first draft of your essays for graduate school.
Brainstorming Exercise

- Break up into groups of 2 or 3 to informally answer questions on the document titled, “Brainstorming Exercise for Prospective Graduate Students.”
  - Feel free to use your resume, transcripts, and computer to help you answer questions in the exercise.

Side note: It’s okay if you don’t know answers to every question in the exercise. Certain questions cannot be answered in five minutes.
Next Workshops: 10/13/16 & 11/10/16

- Same Place & Same Time!
  - BMC 4.212
  - 6:00pm to 7:30pm
  - FREE PIZZA!
- Part II - Revising that First Draft
  - (Followed By Peer Review)
- Part III - Final Proofreading & Polishing
  - (Followed By Peer Review)
Book an appointment with your CSD writing consultant!

- As you develop your personal statements, visit your CSD writing consultant as often as you need! You will receive one-on-one support, tailored to your particular needs.
  - Visit the following link to book your appointments:
    [https://moody.utexas.edu/students/moodywriting](https://moody.utexas.edu/students/moodywriting)
Always Remember: Writing is a PROCESS

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like
PHOTO CONTEST

#MOODYWRITER

Have you seen our flair?
Post a photo with a #MoodyWriter button to Twitter and tag @MoodyWriting for a chance to win a special prize!

@MoodyWriting