



The University of Texas at Austin

Writing Support Program

Moody College of Communication

WRITING PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Get a head start on your graduate school applications
by planning and brainstorming your personal statement

Parts of a general personal statement

1. State your reason(s) for pursuing graduate school and a clinical career in CSD.
 2. Describe some of your most important educational, clinical, volunteer, and/or research experiences that helped grow your knowledge and skills in CSD, solidifying your decision to continue your education.
 3. Specify your reason(s) for wanting to earn your graduate degree from a particular school.
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Part One: Main Idea

Why are you pursuing graduate school and a
clinical career in CSD?

Part One: General Recommendations

- If you wish (or are required) to share, with the admissions committee, a meaningful personal experience that motivated you to pursue graduate school and a career in CSD, avoid a lengthy discussion of your personal experience.
 - Whether or not you briefly share a motivating personal experience, try to pose a general or specific problem in everyday clinical practice you hope play a part in solving as a future clinician.
 - You could use anecdotal evidence (i.e., personal story) to supplement your illustration of a prevalent problem in the field, documented by clinical professionals and researchers in CSD.
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Part One: General Recommendations

- Here are a few ways you can gain insight on general or specific problems in everyday practice you may be interested in helping solve as a future clinician:
 - **Asking clinicians and professors** about problems they see or encounter regularly in everyday clinical practice, as well as potential solutions to current clinical challenges.
 - **Exploring resources provided by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association:**
 - ASHA Leader - a monthly news magazine for clinicians and scientists in CSD
 - ASHA Leader blog and podcasts - provides clinical opinions and information
 - ASHA Practice Portal - a resource database for clinicians, containing information on various professional issues in the field
 - ASHA Journals: contain peer-reviewed periodicals in CSD
 - Contemporary Issues in CSD: peer-reviewed journal of NSSLHA
 - ASHA E-Newsletters: subscribe via e-mail to receive information and resources on CSD
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Part One: ASHA Resource Links

ASHA Leader; ASHA Leader blog and podcasts; ASHA Journals; NSSLHA Publications; ASHA E-Newsletters:

<http://www.asha.org/publications/>

ASHA Practice Portal - Professional Issues:

<http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/>

Contemporary Issues in CSD:

<http://www.asha.org/Publications/cicsd/>

Part One: Example

As a first-generation high school graduate, raised in a Spanish-English bilingual household, I always wondered why many of my family members never obtained their high school diploma. Conversing with some of my family one summer before college, I learned that many of them left school early because they felt alienated by their teachers, who came from from a different cultural and linguistic background. *(Sharing the personal experience)* Consequently, I entered undergraduate studies interested in better understanding why students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds drop out of school. *(Transitioning from the personal experience to related problem in everyday practice)* Through personal research, I found that studies suggest CLD students are more likely to drop out of high school or not attend college when they receive instruction from public school teachers that lack multicultural competence — the ability to provide teaching practices appropriately and effectively in cross-cultural or integrated classrooms. Despite the importance of cultural competence education for school personnel, only one-third of school districts currently provide teachers and administrators with direct training in multicultural competence. *(Posing a relevant problem in everyday practice)* I aim to pursue a graduate degree in multicultural education so I can develop the critical competencies and skills necessary to work as a school administrator, training educators and staff on the best pedagogical practices for integrated classroom environments. Through my work as a high school administrator, I aim to increase the number of culturally sensitive school personnel as well as the number of high school graduates from diverse backgrounds. *(Stating your overall professional goals and how you intend to help solve the problem)*

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Any questions? Let's discuss.

Part Two: Main Idea

Describe some of your most important educational, clinical, volunteer, and/or research experiences that helped grow your knowledge and skills in CSD, solidifying your decision to continue your education.

Part Two: General Recommendations

- Do not rehash your resume
 - Provide details on a small number of experiences meaningful to you
 - Avoid writing about clinical observation experiences
 - Here are some pieces of information you may consider including as you write about each of your experiences:
 - Origins of your participation in a given experience
 - Where and/or when the experience took place
 - Title of your position
 - Things you did or skills you practiced
 - Unique honor, accolade, or opportunity you received from completing the experience
 - Reason(s) you found the experience beneficial to your growth as a student and future clinician
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Part Two: Example

After completing the course, Speech Development, I grew particularly interested in the nature of speech acquisition in bilingual children. My Speech Development class provided me with a wealth of information on speech acquisition in monolinguals, however, the topic of speech development in bilingual children was never discussed (*Origins of your participation in a given experience*). Consequently, I pursued an undergraduate assistantship in the Bilingual Speech Production Lab, part of the University of Texas at Austin (*Where you worked; Your position*). Working under the supervision of the lab's principal investigator, Dr. Harvey Thomas, I assisted in a research project investigating the speech development of Turkish-American bilingual children with and without a speech sound disorder. I collected speech samples from participants and conducted acoustical analysis, using PHON, on participants' speech utterances (*What you did/Skills you practiced*). Through my lab experience, I learned that research findings on bilingual development can inform the diagnostic process of accurately identifying bilingual children with a communication disorder -- minimizing the likelihood of a monolingual or bilingual speech-language pathologist mistaking a language difference for a language disorder. As a future clinician, I aim to stay current with research literature on bilingual speech-language pathology, tailoring my approaches to assessment and treatment based on the individual needs of bilingual clients as well as the most current and valid empirical evidence on bilingualism (*Reasons you found the experience beneficial to your growth as a CSD student/future clinician*).

Any questions? Let's discuss.

Part Three: Main Idea

Specify your reasons for applying to THIS program.

Part Three: General Recommendations

- You will have an easier time writing “part three” of your personal statement if you apply to programs that can meet YOUR clinical and educational needs
 - Write about specific clinical and educational opportunities offered by the graduate program that will help you reach your goals as a future speech-language pathologist
 - Do your research on prospective graduate programs:
 - Surf the websites of prospective graduate programs
 - Talk to professors and graduate students in programs of interest
 - Visit prospective graduate program sites
 - Attend info-day sessions hosted by graduate programs
 - E-mail the graduate coordinator for each prospective graduate program to gain additional information
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Part Three: Example

I aim to pursue a graduate degree in speech-language pathology from the University of Florida so I can develop the competencies necessary to work as a medical speech-language pathologist, providing assessment and treatment services to adults with acquired speech, language, cognitive, and/or swallowing disorders (*Topic sentence*). If admitted into the program, I would take advantage of the opportunity to complete my clinical externship with one of the acute care centers affiliated with the University of Florida. Interning at an acute care facility would expose me to best practices in assessing and treating acquired disorders and give me the chance to practice highly technical skills, such as requesting and conducting a modified barium swallow under the supervision of a practicing speech-language pathologist (*Describing a valuable opportunity offered by the program*) ... (*Describe some additional valuable opportunities offered by the program*)... The clinical and educational opportunities provided by the UF graduate program would prepare me to enter a career in medical speech-language pathology (*Summary sentence*).

Any questions? Any problems, experiences or reasons for applying to a program that you want to break down?

Specific Personal Statement Tips for prospective PhD students:

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.
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Last-Minute Recommendations

- **Read and follow your writing prompts**
 - **Make sure the formatting of your personal statements accords with each program's guidelines** (e.g., double-spaced, one page, no more than 500 words)
 - **Start early, revise often**
 - **Meet with our writing consultant once every week to two weeks during the fall semester**
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Remember: Writing is a PROCESS

Success



what people think
it looks like

Success



what it really
looks like



**DON'T SWEAT: WE ARE HERE TO HELP
YOU SO, YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE THIS...**



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>



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Always Remember: Writing is a PROCESS

Success



what people think
it looks like

Success



what it really
looks like



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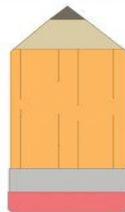


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PHOTO CONTEST



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WRITER**

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Post a photo with a **#MoodyWriter**
button to Twitter and tag
@MoodyWriting for a chance to
win a special prize!



@MoodyWriting

We value your feedback!

**Please take our survey by visiting the link
the below.**



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https://docs.google.com/a/utexas.edu/forms/d/10f5Dgj12ybe9xVVRf10EyYZ5WFa7Rjb9yL2CstwArbl/viewform?edit_requested=true
