

Personal Statement Tip Sheet

1. **Spell out UCSB.** Outside of California, our university is not well known.
2. **Put local places/activities/persons in context.** For example, the reader of your PS will not know a specific doctor or researcher you mention.
3. **Remember the statement should be about you.** If a particular individual had a great impact on your life, fine, but don't write about that person except to show s/he affected you.
4. **Use the characters/pages allotted.** If you have 5300 characters (a character is a letter, punctuation mark or a space) use up 5300 characters, or as close to it as you can. Otherwise it will appear as if you have nothing to say about your own candidacy.
5. **Show the depth of your commitment to the field.** Graduate programs like to see candidates who have demonstrated through their actions just how committed to the field they are.
6. **Edit, edit, edit for typos and grammatical and spelling errors.** These will make you appear careless.
7. **Tailor the PS to the institution and program you're applying to.** This is not the case with the common application, but for students who are applying to a specific school or who are completing secondary applications, make sure you use specific reasons for applying to that program.
8. **Be objective, yet self-revelatory.** Show you know yourself.
9. **Write using a natural voice.** Avoid academic style and formal writing. You can and should use contractions. The audience wants to hear about you in your voice.
10. **Use specific instances to back up general qualities you possess.** Rather than listing experiences you've had (which will likely appear in other portions of the application) focus on specific instances to back up statements you make about yourself. Talking about experiences without putting them into context are not part of a good personal statement.