The Do’s and Don’ts of Personal Statements

**Do:**

* Concentrate on one theme.
* Be unique.
* Start by grabbing attention.
* Read and follow directions; answer all questions.
* Consult outside sources.
* Explain inconsistencies in your history.
* Show. (Don’t just tell.)
* Focus should be relevant to your field of study.
* Show your personality.
* Be straightforward and confident; show your strengths.
* Back things up; be **specific**.
* Have someone else look it over.
* Give yourself at least one week to work on your statement.

**Don’t:**

* Have grammatical errors.
* Appear too scattered.
* Start with “I was Born.”
* Make it a sob story.
* Make it a resume.
* Repeat things already mentioned in your application.
* Use the same statement for every school.
* Tell.
* Be general.
* Use clichés, lists, or chronological histories.
* Use humor unless confident of response.
* Focus too much on other people unless they were a big influence on your career path.
* Forget to proofread

**Online Resources for Personal Statements**

- **University of Washington, Undergraduate Admissions (for Transfer Students)**
  Personal statement topics:
  http://www.washington.edu/students/uga/tr/apply/details/statement/topics.htm
  Five writing tips for the personal statement:
  http://www.washington.edu/students/uga/tr/apply/details/statement/tips.htm

- **Online Writing Lab (OWL) from the Purdue University Writing Lab**
  Includes brainstorming questions, general writing advice, samples of successful statements, and advice from admissions representatives.
  http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html

- **UC Berkley**
  Includes advice for all stages of the personal statement writing process, including brainstorming, organizing, and revising.
  http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/index.htm

- **University of Illinois**
  Lists prompts for brainstorming and personal statement dos and don’ts.
  http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/advice/writing_personal_statements.htm
Includes “Preparing the Personal Statement: Personal Inventory Questions.” The questions are designed to help students think of the important or “key” elements of the personal statement.

http://www.csupomona.edu/~uwc/non_protect/student/perstatinv.htm

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