If You’re Stuck

Do . . .
• go for a walk, or do something physical. Staring at a blank page is intimidating.
• just talk to someone. Dictate to them. You’ll be forced to be authentic in conversation.

Don’t . . .
• be BORING! You want to be interesting. If you can pull it off—be funny. You want your essay to be memorable.
• go to bed before you write all ideas down. You’ll lose them. If a brilliant thought comes to you when you’re about to fall asleep, keep a notebook on your nightstand!

Make Sure . . .
• that your essay matches the rest of your application. A poor essay will make good grades seem questionable. Think of your personal statement as a cover letter.
• that you meet frequently with an advisor! They have more knowledge of the system than you do.

Other Sources to Consider


How to Write a Statement of Purpose Essay

Constructing the only part of a Graduate or Professional School Application that is in your hands.

UVM Resources

Career Services
Living and Learning Building E
802.656.3450, career.services@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/career

The Writing Center
Bailey/Howe Library Rm 105
802.656.4075, writing.center@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/writingcenter/

Thanks to Lisa Schnell,
Associate Dean of the Honors College,
Associate Professor of English

Ariel Robbins
To convince readers:

- You will be able to do the work required.
- You will have enough motivation to complete the degree.
- You are a fitting candidate.
- You should be accepted into the program.

Do your homework. Research the school and department. If you've met with or have focused your work on professors in the department, mention them.

Self-investigation. Know your interests, motivations, qualities that make you a strong candidate. It is your job to figure out why you want to go. Find your own narrative.

Be ready to put in enough time and revision. You should allot about 4 months to create a sufficient final product.

Get a faculty mentor.

**Before You Begin**

- Read the prompt! Be sure to understand and follow all the directions.
- Brainstorm anecdotes and make a list of points and qualities you'd like to be sure to include.
- If you simply don't know where to begin, talk to someone! Bouncing ideas off them can inspire you.

**Content**

- There are seven basic content areas to address in your admissions essay:
  1) The history of your career interests.
  2) Coursework you've done related to the program.
  3) Experiences or research related to the program.
  4) Research or specialization interests.
  5) Future career goals.
  6) Answers to any specific questions the application asks.
  7) Why that particular school or program fits you. Illustrate how well you fit into a program's strengths by relating its qualities to your own.

- Avoid reiterating other parts of your application.

**Style**

- Avoid passive voice. Write in active voice. Our research team completed the project. NOT: The project was completed by our research team.
- Avoid qualifying language (rather, somewhat, quite).
- Avoid generalization; it appears uninformed.
- Avoid value judgments, stereotypes, or controversial statements. Don't force "intellectual" language by using buzzwords; you never know who exactly will read your essay.
- Avoid valuing qualifications or controversial statements. 
- Avoid using "the" or "in" in front of your name.
- Make every word count. Clear and concise sentences are effective.
- Use effective organization: clear and convincing arguments, topic sentences, paragraphs, and transition words.
- When writing, focus on your reader's attention. Be creative but sincere. Write an anecdote that is memorable but entirely authentic.

**Revise**

- Don't forget that this is the most important part of the process.
- Don't force "intellectual" language by using buzzwords; you never know who exactly will read your essay.
- Avoid qualifying language (rather, somewhat, quite).
- Avoid generalization; it appears uninformed.
- Avoid value judgments, stereotypes, or controversial statements. Don't force "intellectual" language by using buzzwords; you never know who exactly will read your essay.
- Get a faculty mentor.

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- Avoid value judgments, stereotypes, or controversial statements. Don't force "intellectual" language by using buzzwords; you never know who exactly will read your essay.
- Avoid slang.
- Don't force "intellectual" language by using excessive vocabulary. You want to seem approachable and relatable. Clear and concise sentences are effective.
- Get a faculty mentor.

**Create Voice**

- Be creative but sincere. Write an anecdote that is memorable but entirely authentic.
- Avoid being sycophantic or disingenuous; there should only be about a paragraph regarding the institution—the rest should be an illustration of distinguishing yourself.
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