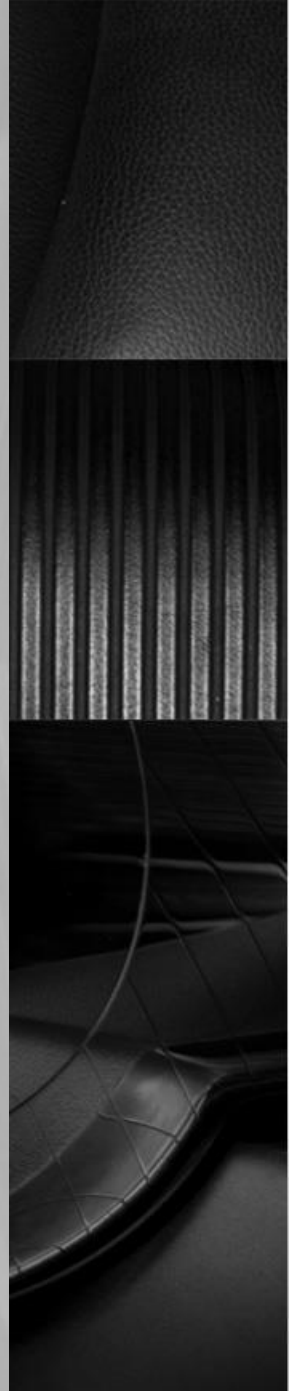


# The Form & Style of Personal Statements





# Introduction to Form & Style

- Form and style are abstract categories that contain a great many compositional processes.
- These processes occur at every level of your personal statement. Every sentence, paragraph, and idea contributes to the expression of form.
- This portion of the presentation will focus on important elements of form and style to help you construct an effective personal statement.



# Introduction Construction

- The introduction of your personal statement needs to accomplish two aims.
- First, you need to engage the reader with a hook of some kind. A short anecdote or expression of your interest in the field should accomplish this objective.
- Second, you need to express why you are a strong candidate. This is essentially your “thesis.” What unique elements do you bring to the table? Your thesis crystalizes these elements within a sentence or a couple of sentences.



# Conceptualizing the “I”

- Utilizing the first person, “I,” is a rather obvious feature of personal statements, but the deployment of this pronoun requires some parameters.
- Most notable, “I” should be an agent in your paper. Therefore, when you utilize “I,” it should be an active manner.
- Reduce utilizations of “I believe,” “I think,” and “I know” statements. Oftentimes, these can be eliminated from the beginning of sentences, and you have a more precise sentence as a result.
- Since “I” will frequently be the subject of your sentences, a common stylistic error is to start too many sentences with “I.” Try to vary this construction whenever possible by combining sentences and using introductory phrases.



# Importance of Concision

- Being concise is of great significance when composing personal statements. Again, this occurs at multiple levels.
- Concision is the product of authorial choices. At a larger level, being concise means choosing ahead of time what you are going to include in your personal statement by crafting an outline.
- Concision also occurs at the sentence level. Sentences are a form of currency in a personal statement in that you are going to be selective in how many sentences you allot to communicate a particular idea. Obviously, you will want to eliminate redundancy when possible.
- Within individual sentences, see where you can eliminate words to be more direct and clear.



# Clarity & Lucidity

- Being clear and lucid is also of great importance when composing a personal statement.
- Ensuring that nearly every paragraph has a topic sentence and follows a clear progression will help with clarity.
- Each paragraph essentially serves as a mini-personal statement. It should possess a sense of cohesion and closure while possessing a clear point within the larger document.



# Utilization of Examples

- Examples are the lifeblood of your personal statement. While describing your experiences and accomplishments serves as a framing device, your utilization of examples is what will make your personal statement personal.
- Choose these examples wisely. Also, be concise when communicating these examples to your reader.
- Your best examples should follow this three stage progression:
  - Situation—describe the actual situation for the reader.
  - Participation—what was your contribution to the experience?
  - Result/Reflection—reflect on the significance/importance of the experience.



# The Boundary between Personal & Professional

- Perhaps the most challenging element within the personal statement is walking the fine line between the personal and the professional.
- The personal elements of the document will come from your use of examples, your knowledge of your audience, and the passion for the profession and the opportunity before you.
- The professional elements of the document will come from how these personal elements are framed and communicated. Using a formal, concise style will demonstrate a mastery of professional discourse.





# Sentence Particularities

- Vary your sentence structures when possible. Concise, simple sentences will compose the majority of your document, but interspersing compound sentences or complex sentences is necessary. Try to not craft overlong sentences.
- Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly. Consider the situation when using them.
- Avoid too many lists within your paper. Sometimes, there is a tendency to want to cram as much content as possible within a paragraph or sentence, but again, you are being selective in your content here.
- There should be no need to ask questions (rhetorical or otherwise) in your personal statement.



# Transitions for Readability

- Transitions are words and phrases that assist with the cohesion of paragraphs.
- You are primarily going to use transitions of addition, contrast, and example.
- Transitions of additions: In addition, additionally, moreover, furthermore.
- Transitions of contrast: however, conversely, in contrast, on the other hand
- Transitions of example: for example, for instance, as a result
- Do not overuse the same transition. Additionally, be mindful regarding how you use transitions as there are situational nuances among them.



# Conclusion to Personal Statement

- The conclusion of your personal statement is your final opportunity to engage the reader.
- Once more, you want to reiterate why you are strong candidate, but not necessarily in the exact wording of your introduction.
- Thanking your readers for their consideration and expressing excitement regarding working a particular institution are also good things to include.



# Editing and Proofreading Questions

- When composing a high-stakes document like a personal statement, editing and proofreading are crucial processes.
- Reading the document aloud is a great strategy for catching those small sentence-level errors. Additionally, reviewing with the last paragraph first enables greater attention to grammatical errors.
- You should also be critiquing the construction of your sentences. Are additional/fewer sentences needed to make your point? Is your example strongly positioned? Do you need a transition?



# Conclusion

- Form and style are rather nebulous concepts that entail a great many writing processes.
- At every level of composition, form and style manifest, so take note of the various levels (essay, paragraph, sentence, etc.).
- While the personal statement is, in essence, a personal document, you are not alone in its composition. The Academic Writing Center can assist you!



# The Academic Writing Center

- Located in Langsam Library 401 N, the AWC can review drafts of your personal statements, providing feedback on form, style, and development of ideas.
- Writing consultants are available during the summer (our hours are Monday-Thursday, 11am-5pm). These consultants are well-versed in assisting students with documents of this nature.
- You can schedule an appointment online at [uc.edu/awc](http://uc.edu/awc) or by phone at 513-556-3912.
- If you cannot make it in for an appointment, we do have online feedback options available (more info on our website).