

ESSAYS FOR APPLYING TO GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Why Graduate / Professional School? This is a serious commitment, so you will want to identify and describe your early exposure / interest in your chosen academic field. Try not use a cliché like, 'I have always wanted to be'. Write about specifically what led you to choose this academic / professional field.

What are my qualifications? Try not to list just attributes, but describe concrete experience that will show your abilities. Focus on any related work, volunteer, or educational experiences that will relate to your graduate studies. Depending upon the type of graduate program you are going into, research experience may be beneficial to mention.

Don't write a dissertation: Try to avoid an "academic style" of writing that you believe will impress the reader. Write clearly and precisely.

Don't bore the reader: Admissions panels read literally thousands of essays. Try to grab the reader with some sort of snapshot into why you are choosing graduate school and your profession. Example:

Before: "I always wanted to be a Speech-Pathologist"

After: "Because a Physical-Therapist was running late, I decided that Speech-Pathology was the career for me. During my senior year in high school I was scheduled to job shadow a Physical-Therapist when I got a call saying that they were running late. The clinic felt bad that I was just sitting there, so they suggested that I shadow a Speech-Pathologist. After completing the shadowing, I was convinced that Speech-Pathology was the career road for me.

Do use personal detail: If there are specific incidents that happened to you personally that have affected you and your decision to pursue a graduate education, tell the reader. This personal touch will show who you really are and how your life affects your decisions. (SEE ABOVE)

Do be concise and don't be wordy: Wordiness takes up space and may confuse the important ideas that you are trying to convey to the reader. Get to the point. Stay focused, this is not your autobiography.

Do address your weaknesses but don't dwell on them: This may be your only opportunity to explain any deficiencies that you may have in your application. If your GPA is lower than what you hoped for, explain why (without saying you were out partying all the time); tell them what you have done to turn the situation around.

Do write in an action oriented manner: Remember when you were writing your resume using verbs to create a sense of action and accomplishment? The same goes for your essay.

Do seek multiple opinions: Ask faculty members, your career service office, and your advisor for their opinions on your essay.

Does it have a central theme?

Does my introduction grab the reader?

Do I use concrete examples to support my details?

Do I write in an action oriented manner?

What is the best (and worst) part of the essay?

Do get ready to revise and proofread: This needs no explanation