# Writing a Statement of Purpose

## What is it?
A statement of purpose is a crucial piece requested for several application packages. It is an overview of what you have already done (education, employment, publications, achievements, etc) and what you plan to study. It is probably the most important piece of your application package. If all things are equal, this will probably be the deciding piece.

### Why is it so important?
Because it presents you as a good and hard working student, someone who will finish the degree; it is an opportunity for self-promotion, to distinguish yourself from other applicants. It tells selection committees what you have accomplished, how well you will fit into the program and how committed you are to a graduate education.

## What to CONSIDER:
- Use detail prudently and address your weaknesses wisely
- Focus on the opening paragraph
- Be interesting and personal
- Tell your story
- Be concise and write correctly
- Follow requested guidelines

## What to AVOID:
- Being too personal
- Writing about inappropriate topics
- Forgetting to change the name of the school (for multiple applications)
- Dwelling on weaknesses or being too modest or too braggy
- Using clichés or vague generalities
- Using ‘big words’

## Getting started

### Language Choices:
- Use “I”—but don’t overuse it
- Use active voice/present tense
- Not too casual, not too formal

### Valuable touches:
- Mentioning several faculty by name (in a meaningful way)
- Mention something about what current students are working on or publications and highlights of former student

## Read instructions carefully:
- Personal statement
- Statement of interest
- Statement of purpose
- Research agenda
- Teaching philosophy

## Do your research:
- On the discipline
- On the program
- On the faculty
- On the current students
- On the graduated students

## Use a writing process:
- Brainstorm: draft quickly, draw maps, free write, and draw pictures
- Revise, revise again, and revise some more!
- Have someone read it

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Find more Professional Development Resources under the “current students” tab of our web:

[http://graduate.utep.edu](http://graduate.utep.edu)