



The Personal Statement

Purpose of the Personal Statement

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- Part of UC's comprehensive review process
- Opportunity to provide information that supports and augments the review process
- Helps readers **know** and **understand** applicants.

Purpose of the Personal Statement

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- Adds clarity, depth and meaning to information collected in other parts of the UC application
- Completes the application for admission
- An admission decision will never be based on the content of a personal statement alone

A Message from UC Faculty

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- While it is acceptable to receive feedback or helpful suggestions, applicants' personal statements

should reflect their own ideas and be written by them alone!!!



Understanding the Task

Instructions

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- **Two questions**
- **Students respond to both questions.**
 - **A maximum of 1,000 words total**
 - **Students should stay within the word limit as closely as they can. For example, a little over—1,012 words-fine, 1,050- a bit much!!**
- **Students choose length of each response.**
 - **If they choose to respond to one prompt at greater length, we suggest the shorter answer be no less than 250 words.**

In Other Words.....

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- Divide the **1,000** limit however you want between the two prompts...

BUT...

- The shorter prompt should **NOT** be less than **250** words!!

What is the Reader looking for?

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○ What qualities/characteristics define the applicant?

(YOU)

○ Which of these qualities/characteristics is most prominent?

○ Are these qualities appealing?

Prompt #1

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Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — **AND tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.**

Aspiration=

- **A strong desire for high achievement.**
- **An object of such desire; an ambition.**

How did your **FAMILY** shape your **DREAMS** and **ASPIRATIONS**?

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- o **Family Make up?**
- o **Educational impact?**
- o **Extenuating Circumstances?**
- o **Responsibilities?**

How did your **SCHOOL** shape your **DREAMS** and **ASPIRATIONS**?

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- o **Make up?**
- o **Activities?**
- o **Responsibilities?**
- o **Coursework?**

How did your **COMMUNITY** shape your **DREAMS** and **ASPIRATIONS**?

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- o **Make up?**
- o **Educational impact?**
- o **Extenuating Circumstances?**
- o **Responsibilities?**

Sample Thesis — Prompt 1

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Although my father is now employed, my family has had to struggle in order to survive. I am the oldest of three boys and, in addition to attending classes, I work part time to provide food and shelter for my family. Working has helped me stay disciplined and use my time appropriately. As a result, I have been able to maintain high academic achievement while supporting my family. These experiences have instilled in me a strong desire to continue my education.

Prompt #2

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Tell us about A personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

#2 To Think About...

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- How will you stand out?
- How has it contributed to **WHO YOU ARE TODAY?**
- How do you spend your day?
- What qualities do you exhibit **daily?**
- **Examples:**
 - ✦ **Resiliency**
 - ✦ **Organization**
 - ✦ **Responsibility**

Sample Thesis — Prompt 2

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Although I do not plan to major in veterinary science, **my experiences raising and caring for animals have helped me understand how important animals are to human well-being.** **Because I have seen the result of human disregard for other forms of life, I am better able to appreciate the importance of ethical treatment for all.** **As a result, I will be able to contribute my knowledge of animal preservation and my skill as an organizer to the campus environment.**

Additional Comments...*Like an additional prompt!*

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- Use Additional Comments box for clarification, expansion on important details:
 - Additional names
 - Visa issues
 - Additional exams
 -other relevant information **not previously stated** on application OR previous prompts.

What could this mean?

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Question:

- Describe any **thing** else that you have not had the opportunity to include elsewhere in your application.
 - **500-word limit**
 - **ONE thing--- strategically chosen!!**

Sample Thesis

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Although my school does not offer Advanced Placement Spanish, **I wanted to master Spanish** so that I could enrich my understanding of the literature of Latin America and prepare for my eventual career goal of becoming a diplomat. **I prepared on my own for the Advanced Placement Spanish exam, and as a result have become a more disciplined and engaged student in all of my classes.**

Nuts and Bolts

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- **Minimum 2 prompts, possibly 3 with the additional comments section.**
- **Maximum 1,000 words on the two prompts + 500 word limit if you complete the additional comments portion.**

Writing Strategies for Students

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NOW!!

Steps to an Effective Personal Statement

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Draft, Get Feedback, Revise

Develop Topic and Thesis

Read Critically

Gather Information

The Pact

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- Read your application critically– the essay reader has an expectation of you!
- You can anticipate the expectations by reading through the application.
- Questions should be answered- **COMPLETELY!** Figure out what is wanted **BEFORE** you start your statement!!

Readers Want...

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- **Organization and clarity provided by a persuasive thesis, analytical topic sentences, well-chosen examples**
- **A response that supports and completes — by clarifying and contextualizing — the information in the application**

Levels of Questions Strategy

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- **Level one: What does it say?**
- **Level two: What does it mean?**
- **Level three: Why/how does it matter?**

- **Answers to L1 questions provide details in paragraphs. This is ALREADY in your app!**
 - **FACTS**
- **Answers to L2 questions are topic sentences of paragraphs. Prove it!**
 - **INTERPRETATION**
- **Answers to L3 questions are thesis statements of essays. Puts it all in context- MEANING**

Tips Responses

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- **Avoid irrelevant background information**
- **Understand meaning of key words**
- **Ensure that response addresses what the prompt asks for**
- **Make sure each sentence advances the argument**
- **Avoid a collection of facts or examples**
- **Use concrete details and make them clear, rich, and meaningful**

Writing Process

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- **Brainstorm using levels of questions**
- **Draft**
- **Get feedback — give readers at least a week to respond**
- **Revise for organization, clarity & meaning**
- **Proofread**

Don't say

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SHOW!!!!!!!

How to Receive Feedback

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- Provide the application and the personal statement, not just the statement
 - **Double spaced!**
- Provide a list of questions you would like answered
- Ask reader to comment on ideas and the level of persuasiveness, not just grammar
- Find readers who resemble your target audience
 - **STRANGERS!!**

Now What?

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- **Start!**
- **Now!**
- **Draft!**
- **Find a Computer!**
- **Join us for the next college workshop on:**

The Common Application

10/21/09

Thank You!!