



PERSONAL STATEMENTS

WHY DO LAW SCHOOLS REQUEST A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

1. The personal statement provides an opportunity for the committee/reviewer to gauge your technical writing skills and ability to articulate your thoughts in your writing in a limited amount of space. In general, most personal statements should not exceed more than 2 pages, but some applications will allow you to write more. The committee/reviewers most likely will review hundreds or even thousands of applicants, so your personal statement should hit the points of your theme and avoid unnecessary fluff while capturing the attention of the reviewer.
2. Provides the committee/reviewer an opportunity to learn more about you outside of the resume, academic transcript, and letters of recommendation.

You might reflect on the following topics as a starting point for crafting your personal statement. Some applications might provide you with a specific prompt or topic for the personal statement:

1. **Why do you want to pursue a legal education?** *This question should encourage you to think about why you need a JD for your career rather than pursuing a graduate degree (MA, MSW, MPA, MBA) or a different certification.
2. **What experiences in your undergraduate career have shaped you as a person?** Law school admissions representatives enjoy reading about personal and professional growth because you will grow in different ways in law school. You can talk about challenges/adversity you may have overcome, community involvement, study abroad and cultural engagement, or any experience that may have changed your point of view *in a positive way. The experience itself may not have been positive, but you can talk about what you learned from that experience or a positive outcome of that experience. Law school will push and challenge you in negative ways, so demonstrating that you have a positive mindset even in difficult times speaks volumes to admission committees/reviewers.

We recommend creating multiple versions of your personal statement if you intend to write at least one version to a specific school in mind. If possible, mention the reasons why you want to attend that school throughout the theme of your personal statement that makes sense with your accomplishments and interests instead of tossing out a paragraph at the end as your conclusion. This avoids making the law school look like an afterthought in your personal statement or appearing as a generic “why X law school” statement. **Make sure that the name of the law school in that personal statement matches with the application.** It is embarrassing to accidentally submit your personal statement to the wrong law school.

TOPICS TO AVOID OR PROCEED WITH CAUTION

1. **Talking more about friends, family, family-friends, etc. more than yourself:** The personal statement should be about you. You can include a sentence or two, no more than a paragraph, about a person or people who may have inspired you to pursue law school (such as a parent or grandparent), but in the words of a law school admissions representative, “They will want to admit your grandmother by the end of the personal statement instead of you.”
2. **High school experiences:** Law schools want to hear about your undergraduate experiences because those experiences are more recent and speak to your perspective as an adult. There are exceptions when discussing life-altering events in the personal statement from childhood, but that experience(s) should not make up the entirety of your personal statement.
3. **Cliché quotes, using legal jargon/using a “lawyer voice,” writing in a casual voice, and/or hot takes:**
 - a. You can use a quote in your personal statement, but the most effective use of quotes directly relates to a personal experience mentioned in the personal statement. For example, you may choose to use a quote from a book that you read for a class or quote a friend, family member, or professional/academic mentor. Otherwise, the quote may seem insincere and/or miss the mark in your story.
 - b. You should not use legal jargon in your personal statement (unless you have paralegal experience) or narrate your story as if you are speaking to a courtroom because you are not a lawyer – yet.
 - c. You can choose to write about controversial topics (such as, but not limited to religion and politics), but make sure you write about the topic with respect and self-awareness. Approaching the topic with a shock and awe approach may miss the mark depending on the reviewer/committee reading your personal statement.

4. **Re-living traumatic experiences:** Sadly, many people's first personal interaction with lawyers is not a positive experience— such as divorce and custody hearings, drug convictions, murder trials, etc. If one of these experiences was a formative part of your life, it is fine to include that experience in your personal statement. However, you do want to avoid strictly focusing on the lawyer(s) or other people involved in the event. Instead, we encourage you to write about how that moment, memory, or experience connects with other experiences you have had since then that illustrate personal growth in your story.

You should ask at least one person to review your personal statement to make sure that the reader understands the theme and/or message or your story that you want to convey in your statement. If the reader knows you personally, ask them to read it as if they have never met you before because the law school admissions committee reviewer will unlikely have met you before.

Do not pay anyone to read or write your personal statement, and be VERY mindful if you utilize any AI tools to assist in crafting your personal statement. Law school admissions representatives can notice discrepancies with your statement and LSAT writing sample and can deny your application. If the law school decides to admit you with a plagiarized personal statement, the Bar Admissions Committee could notice and deny your application to sit for the bar to be a licensed attorney.

Personal Statement Examples: <https://7sage.com/law-school-ps-examples/>

DIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Law schools will review your LSAT and GPA information in considering your competitiveness at their school, but admissions representatives also value diversity in building their incoming law school class. If you have the option to submit a meaningful diversity statement, you should write one to include in your law school application. This is another piece of information that the admissions committee and/or reviewer can take into consideration when holistically reviewing your application. Diversity can include (but is not limited to): differences in race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, first-generation students, low-income households, military families, and regional differences – such as students who come from rural towns.

Your diversity statement should highlight how your perspective will bring diversity to your future law school class – so researching the law school's student population and location can help inform whether you would qualify as a diverse student at that school. For example, if you apply to Cumberland School of Law as a student from Birmingham, AL you might not offer a diverse perspective in contrast with applying to University of New Hampshire School of Law. While the structure can mimic the personal statement, do not simply copy, paste,

and re-word a couple of sentences to submit as your diversity statement. Doing so makes you look like you did not put any thought into the prompt.

Diversity Statement Examples: <https://blog.spiveyconsulting.com/examples-of-diversity-statements/>

OPTIONAL ESSAYS

In general, optional essays are shorter essays that expect you to answer a specific prompt. Some law schools might ask, “Why do you want to attend X school?” for their optional essay. Some law schools might ask you to write about a general topic or address a current issue. If you have a sincere and thoughtful answer for these essays, then consider completing the optional essay as a part of your law school application. It is another piece of information that the law school admissions committee and/or reviewer can use to measure your writing skills and learn more about your individual perspective.

Optional Essay Tips: <https://www.spiveyconsulting.com/blog-post/explaining-why-youre-applying-to-their-law-school-the-why-x-statement/>