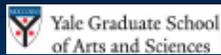


Writing the 'Personal' Statement

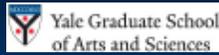
*Robert Harper-Mangels, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean, Yale University
Graduate School*



Overview

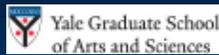
Your personal statement provides the mortar or 'intellectual glue' that ties together the rest of your application. In the absence of an interview, it is your opportunity to:

- explain choices
 - emphasize strengths
 - explain any red flags
 - highlight motivations
-
- What do they want to know?
 - Organization of the statement
 - Assorted Tips & Advice



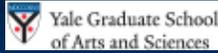
What do they want to know?

- Application may provide clear instructions... or not.
- Some clues:
 - how long is the statement?
 - what are the other pieces of the application?
 - what are you applying for?



What are you applying for?

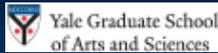
- Education Program (graduate school)
 - Accomplishments, career goals, future potential, motivation
- Research grant
 - Training, ability to carry out the project, motivation
- Travel grant
 - ability to work independently, cultural experience, motivation
- Prestigious national award
 - leadership, creativity, potential for future leadership



What they MAY want to see

- Educational Background
- Research Experience
- Real World Experience
- Accomplishments/Award/Publications
- Leadership Ability (concrete examples)
- Creativity (concrete examples)
- Motivation
- Career Goals

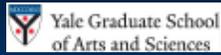
- "Intellectual Biography"
- Consider the rest of the app; avoid significant overlap



Organization

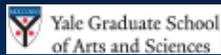
- Chronological organization
 - Show progression
 - How does one experience lead to the next?
 - Where did you come from, how did you get here, where are you going?

- Your path does not need to be a straight line!



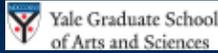
Organization

- Relevance of experiences to proposal
- Before you write... what points do you want to convey?
- Remember:
 - Provide a picture of who you are
 - may replace an interview
 - Narrative vs 'just the facts': be natural

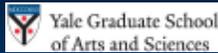


TIPS

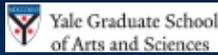
- Concrete examples - good
- Hand waving - bad



- I have been interested in science ever since I was a young child. As I have grown, so too has the desire to be a scientist grown within me. I am fascinated by the myriad processes taking place within us at any given moment. Though organisms live and die, these processes are forever, passed from organism to organism, and it is the passionate desire to understand these processes that drives me to become the best scientist I can be.
- I am intelligent, creative, and recognized by my peers as a leader.
- It has always been a dream to attend (fill in name of university).

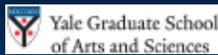


- I have been interested in science ever since I was a young child. As I have grown, so too has the desire to be a scientist grown within me. I am fascinated by the myriad processes taking place within us at any given moment. Though organisms live and die, these processes are forever, passed from organism to organism, and it is the passionate desire to understand these processes that drives me to become the best scientist I can be.
 - Preparation? Experience? Specific fields of study?
- I am intelligent, creative, and recognized by my peers as a leader.
 - One example of a time you were creative or recognized as a leader.
- It has always been a dream to attend (fill in name of university).
 - Why? To work with whom? What resources or facilities or people are attractive?



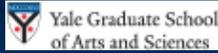
TIPS

- Concrete examples - good
- Hand waving - bad
- Think from the reader's point of view - what do they want to learn?
- Which of your experiences might stand out? Discuss!
- Are there 'red flags' to address?



Addressing Red Flags

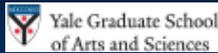
- Don't nitpick - everyone has weaknesses
- If there is something glaring and unusual that is not explained elsewhere (interruption in record, unusually poor grades or scores)... Explain!
- Don't try to explain if there is no explanation.



TIPS

- Concrete examples - good
- Hand waving and filler - bad
- Think from the reader's point of view - what do they want to learn?
- Which of your experiences might stand out? Discuss!
- Are there red flags to address?

- Speak in your own voice - other students have different stories to tell
- Don't overwrite. The reviewer is looking for preparedness and maturity, not a short novel.
- Many ways to organize... be consistent and logical
- Avoid redundancy



- The personal statement is, by definition, personal.
- It should say something about who you are, what motivates you
- It should say something about how you got here, how you prepared for this opportunity
- It should say something about where you are going.
- Highlight your strengths, explain your weaknesses
- Keep it simple