

# Statement of Purpose - Writing Exercises

## Graduate Admissions Essay

Answer each question with a narrative essay of any length, from a paragraph to several pages, what ever feels right.

1. What makes you unique? Different? Unusual?
2. What writers and which particular articles in your field of study have had the greatest influence on the development of your thought?
3. Who were your favorite professors in college, and why? How has each influenced you?
4. What is the best paper or exam you ever wrote in your major, and what makes it good?
5. What do you consider the most important book, play, article, or film you have ever read/seen, and how has it influenced you?
6. What is the single most important concept you have learned in college?
7. What are some of the encouraging words others have said to or about you over the years?
8. Did a particular teacher or professor encourage you to pursue your studies, go beyond your abilities, or pursue a goal or dream?
9. Where were you and what were you doing when you first thought of pursuing this particular direction of graduate study?
10. What were you doing when you decided to pursue this particular area of graduate study?
11. How has your interest evolved, and what specific turning points can you identify?
12. What work experiences have led you to believe you would like to pursue graduate education?
13. What experiences as a volunteer or traveler have influenced your career direction?
14. What experiences from your family life have contributed to this choice?
15. How have you prepared yourself to succeed in graduate school?
16. What body of relevant knowledge will you take with you?
17. What study or laboratory skills have you honed to date?
18. What personal attributes or physical characteristics make you particularly likely to succeed in your new career?
19. What is your biggest accomplishment to date?
20. What research have you completed to date? Describe your level of participation in the research. Be ready to describe the hypothesis, methodology, and findings, or you should not be talking about your research in your essay! It is also a good idea to spell out the ramifications of the research. Finally, list what you really learned from the research.
21. Can you add any of the professors from your targeted school?
22. Make a list of names you might want to work into your essay, but do not make any firm plans yet as to who you might want to include. Your list may include the following: Influential undergraduate professors, specific professors at the targeted institution who interest you, major writers and thinkers in the field who have interested you, Professors with whom you have visited or corresponded or spoken, and any other people you may have in common with the targeted institution.

Adapted from Graduate Admissions Essays by Donald Asher (Ten Speed Press, 2008)