

*Let's get personal! Let's get personal! Let's get personal!*

## Let's take a close look at GETTING IN!



### I. Before You Start Writing

#### Read the Instructions Carefully

- Follow the directions, adhering to page and word limits.
- Err on the side of brevity.

#### Research the Field and the Program

- Why are you interested in *this* program?
- What is special about the faculty, courses, placement record, and facilities?

#### Reflect on Yourself

- What details or anecdotes would help your reader understand you?
- What about your family, education, life experiences, and/or values have brought you to this field?
- How can you turn what might seem like a trivial reason for applying (location) into a positive (ties to the area)?
- What motivates and interests you?
- What special skills—such as leadership, management, research, or communication—do you have?
- Why should the program choose you over other applicants?

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### II. Writing a Draft

- Think about the prompt and the previous questions.
- Don't include information you have already given in other parts of the application.
- Assure your audience you look forward to the challenges of the program.
- Decide how specific you want to be about your future goals, depending on the program.
- Be straightforward about any information in your application you need to explain.
- Avoid clichés and specialized or technical language.

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#### *Do!!*

**Do assure your audience you look forward to the challenges of the problem. Be straightforward about any information in your application you need to explain.**

Be straightforward about any information in your application you need to explain. Overall, assure your audience you are capable academically, willing to adhere to the program's demands, and interesting to have around.

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personal!

### *Don't!!*

*Don't* include a lot of information you have already included in the rest of the application.

*Don't* be overly specific about your future goals, unless you need to do so for a particular program.

*Don't* use clichés and specialized or technical language.

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### **What About Risk Taking?**

- Consider the persona you are projecting by trying to stand out from the crowd of applicants.
  - Assess the benefits and drawbacks of such a strategy.
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### **III. Revision, Re-vision, Proofreading**

- Ask several people to read your essay, and write their comments down.
  - Seek out someone in the field to read and comment.
  - Revise your essay, and then set it aside.
  - Take out your essay, and revise it again.
  - Solicit more feedback.
  - Revise yet again.
  - Proofread and format the essay, using conventional font size and margins.
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### **Need Help?**

#### **People**

Schedule an appointment at the Writing Studio: <http://aas.duke.edu/wstudio>

#### **On-Line**

<http://www.essayedge.com>  
<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/gradapp.html>  
<http://psych.hanover.edu/handbook/applic2.html>  
<http://socialworkschool.tripod.com/essay.html>  
<http://www.accepted.com/>  
<http://www.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/grad/gradappprocess.html>

#### **Other Resources**

Curry & Kasbar. *Essays That Worked: 50 essays from successful applications to the nation's top colleges*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990.

Stelzer, Richard J. *How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School*. Princeton, New Jersey: Peterson's, 1993.