Graduate School Admissions Essays

Self A ssessment Questions: Before you start writing, organize your thoughts, goals and experiences by answering the following questions.

Essay should be typed, not handwritten, and error free.

Read the questions! Make sure you respond to the questions asked. Follow instructions regarding length of essay. If there is no limit, two pages double-spaced is good guideline. Essays range from a very general, comprehensive personal statement to very specific questions.

Use a strong opening sentence or paragraph. Try to grab the reader's attention. Be clear and concise. Organize your essay effectively.

Content Tips

Include a combination of personal and academic information.

Discuss the history of your interest and your goals for obtaining the graduate degree. When talking about yourself, use examples rather than just stating facts.

Do not simply repeat information found elsewhere in your application such as extracurricular activities. Go beyond the obvious and indicate how these activities have impacted you or your choice of career.

Substantiate your preparation and ability to perform. Be as specific about your career goals as possible. Emphasize your passion for the field!

Indicate some knowledge of the program to which you are applying. The more specific the better.

Be yourself! Don't write what you THINK the admissions committee wants to hear. Be positive and enthusiastic. Help the admission committee learn who you are beyond the "numbers."

Avoid controversial topics such as politics and religion. Don't criticize the profession that you plan to join. Avoid clichés (I want to be a doctor because I'm good at science and I like to help people.)

The statement can include some explanation of less than stellar grades or test scores. Before you mail it in

Ask yourself and others if your essay is relevant, interesting and memorable. Always have someone proofread your essay particularly a professor or someone

familiar with admission essays.

 Don't send the exact same essay to multiple schools if the question asked is different. Never send an essay to one school with the name of ANOTHER school in the text! (this happens and it's a turn off) Resources:

There are several books and numerous web sites that contain general information about writing a personal statement as well as examples of graduate admission essays. A few include:

Application Essay Writing 101 at http://info.gradschools.com/ Graduate Admission Essays: Write Your Way into the Graduate School of Your Choice, Donald Asher, Ten Speed Press, 2000. How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School, Richard Stelzer, Petersons, 1997.