The Law School Personal Statement

What is the Personal Statement?

• It is required by most law schools as part of the application. Be sure to carefully review the application instructions from each school, as they may have differing writing prompts.
• It should be about two pages in length, double-spaced, 12-point font, no less than 1-inch margins. Carefully review the application instructions from each school for specific details.
• It is the most important writing sample a school will receive from you. Lawyers write professionally, so you must demonstrate exceptional writing abilities throughout your application.
• For most schools, it takes the place of an interview, and it will separate you as a unique individual from other candidates with similar academic qualifications.

How Do I Get Started?

• Ask yourself why you want to go to law school and why you wish to practice law.
• Inform yourself about the schools to which you would apply, and ask yourself why you are interested in those schools specifically and what you would contribute to them.
• Read through personal statement samples, and ask yourself how you will stand out from them.
• Create an outline to determine the structure of your personal statement.
• Attend a personal statement workshop hosted by the NYU Preprofessional Advising Center.

Things to Consider

• Be “personal” and use experiences from your own life. Be honest and insightful, not dramatic.
• Tailor your personal statement to reflect the individual law schools to which you are applying.
• Do not summarize your resume or reiterate information available from other parts of your application.
• A strong introduction and conclusion are essential. Show continuity throughout.
• Maintain a positive, enthusiastic, and optimistic tone. If you have weaknesses to address, you should write about them in an addendum, not in the personal statement.
• Avoid clichés, slang, contractions, “legalese,” passive voice, and controversial issues.
• It is expected that you will go through several drafts. Once you think your personal statement is complete, put it away for a few days, then return to it to review and edit again.
• Your grammar, punctuation, and spelling should be flawless.

Additional Resources

• Use online resources through various websites, such as NYU Prelaw.
• Have others review and edit your drafts, such as friends, instructors, and lawyers.
• Both the NYU Writing Center and the NYU Wasserman Center review personal statement drafts for graduate and professional school admissions. Schedule an appointment.