

The Personal Statement

www.admissions.ucsb.edu



What is the Personal Statement? The Personal Statement is an integral part of the UC application. The content of the Personal Statement should add clarity, richness, and meaning to the information you present in other parts of your UC application, enabling the Office of Admissions to form the best impression of you.

Technical Information

- You have 1,000 words to answer both prompts.
- Your shortest response should be at least 250 words.
- Avoid the use of special characters.
- Feedback and suggestions from others are useful, but you are responsible for writing the Personal Statement.

Personal Statement Prompts

Prompt #1 (Freshman):

Describe the world you come from – for example, your family, community or school – and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

Suggestions for Prompt #1 (Freshman)

- The majority of your response should be the description of your world.
- While describing your world, don't forget to add how the world has influenced your development as a student, or as a person.

Prompt # 1 (Transfer):

What is your intended major? Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe any experience you have had in the field – such as volunteer work, internships and employment, participation in student organizations and activities – and what you have gained from your involvement.

Suggestions for Prompt #1 (Transfer)

- Consider including course work experience. This may include working with faculty or doing research projects.

Prompt #2 (All Applicants):

Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Suggestions for Prompt #2

- Think about answering this prompt first, as it may help set the context you want to describe in Prompt #1.
- Choose a topic that has not been addressed in detail in another section of the application.
- Keep the information relevant to your personal experiences.

Suggestions for Writing the Personal Statement

Answer the question. Take time and think about each prompt before you start writing. Use details and examples to make your point. Use your words strategically; is there a reason behind your example? Write to add context and depth, not to fill space.

Give yourself time to edit. Start writing to answer each prompt, then go back and review the word count, content, and overall message. You may not have space to tell us everything so make your words count.

Be you. Remember to talk about yourself so that we can get to know your personality, talents, accomplishments and potential to succeed at a UC campus. Use plenty of "I" statements.

Stick to one topic per response. Making a list of accomplishments, activities, awards, or work will lessen the impact of your words. Expand on a topic by using examples and facts for maximum impact to an Admissions reader.

Brainstorm Topics. When you are composing your Personal Statement, consider including:

- Personal triumphs or challenges – If you decide to talk about a challenge or triumph, do not forget to explain what you learned from the experience.
- Leadership opportunities – We value leadership at many levels (e.g. family, school, or community).
- Experiences outside the classroom – Consider experiences that have made an impact on your life (e.g., travels, church/temple, work, youth groups, or your family).
- Disabilities – If you are living with a disability, feel free to talk about it in the context of your ability to succeed.
- Culture – If your culture has influenced who you are, talk about it. Let it add to the picture we form of you.

Stay focused. Avoid common mistakes such as:

- Inappropriate use of humor.
- Creative writing (poems, scene setting, or clichés).
- Quotations – We want to know your thoughts and words, not someone else's.
- Generalities – Stick to facts and specifics you want us to know about yourself.
- Repetition – Do not talk about the same topic in each response. Give us new information we cannot find in other sections of the application.
- Lists of accomplishments or activities.
- Philosophy – Do describe your world in facts and examples. Don't ask questions without answers.
- Don't be campus specific. You're talking to all the UC campuses in your response.

The Personal Statement Worksheet

The following worksheet is geared to help you start the writing process for your Personal Statement on the freshman application. **There is no 'correct' answer to the Personal Statement**, so just start writing. The UC application is available online at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/apply. Additional hints and suggestions can be found on the University of California web site.

Good Luck

Prompt #1:

Describe the world you come from – for example, your family, community or school – and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

Things to consider before answering Prompt #1:

- Do you live in a small rural area or large city?

What are the challenges or opportunities you found in your community?

- Are you an only child or do you come from a large family? Do you identify with one or more cultures?

Are you the first person in your family to attend college? How does your family interact with one another?

- How large is your high school? Are you in a magnet program or charter school?

How are you challenging yourself in school to prepare for college? Is attending college common for graduating seniors?

The area that was easiest to answer could be a good topic for Prompt #1. Remember to add facts and examples that *describe* the world that has influenced you.

Prompt #2:

Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Things to consider before answering Prompt #2:

- Make a list of four things that describe you (e.g. athletic, a leader, first in my family to go to college, started a club, own my own business, etc.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now ask a friend or family member to do the same thing:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Did anything overlap? Can you see areas where you want to share more information? If so, consider using this topic to respond to Prompt #2.

- What do you consider one of your strengths? What are you good at?

This can be another possible topic choice for Prompt #2.

Final Hints:

When you find your topic, remember to give *examples* of what you learned from your experiences or your accomplishments. Highlight your experiences and show how they contribute to the person you are today.

Avoid using the same topic (or examples) in both responses. Every piece of *new* information can add clarity to your application. When writing you want to explain, not philosophize; add depth, not theory to your application.