

LPC, Cole

Essay1: Writing A Personal Statement

At some point in your academic career, you are likely to be asked to write a personal statement. This type of writing often involves presenting yourself on paper with the goal of persuading your reader to give you something such as admission to a university or college, a scholarship, or an internship. There is usually a strict page limit and a prompt asking you to describe yourself. Being able to write this kind of essay can make a huge difference in the opportunities you have later in life.

For this essay, I would like you to imagine you are applying for a scholarship at Las Positas College. Please fully address the prompt on the back of this paper, limiting yourself to two typed pages, double-spaced, with one inch margins.

Through the process of writing this essay, you will learn the following:

The steps in the writing process;

How to analyze and respond to a prompt requiring a personal statement;

How to participate in peer response;

How to narrow a broad topic and anticipate a reader's questions.

Requirements:

You must meet with the instructor for an individual conference (or you will lose a letter grade).

You must participate in peer response, arriving to class prepared with three copies of your essay (see Daily Schedule).

The final draft of the essay must be typed.

Put your final draft in the manila envelope required for the course. Include all prewriting and all drafts (with instructor and peer comments).

Objectives:

You will be graded on the following criteria:

Did you fully address the prompt?

Did you honor the page limit?

Do you have a main idea (clear thesis statement)?

Do the body paragraphs contain clear points that develop the main idea?

Is all of the information in the essay related to the main idea?

Are the supporting examples fully developed and appropriate, "showing" rather

Does the introduction "hook" the reader?

Does the conclusion answer the question, "So what?"

Is the organization logical, with clear paragraphs and smooth transitions?

Do the sentences flow smoothly with no mechanical or usage errors?

Individual Conference Date and Time: _____

Peer Response Date(s): _____

Final Draft Due: _____

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English 1A: Homework due Tuesday, 8/30

Read the student essays handed out in class. At the end of each essay, write a brief (1-3 sentences is fine) evaluation of how effective you thought the essay was.

Develop the freewrite you began in class. You may type or handwrite, addressing the following:

List your goals (academic, career, personal)

Pick the top 2 – 3 goals and explain how you plan to achieve them

List any obstacles you have encountered (or expect to encounter) which have affected your ability to do well in school or which will affect your ability to reach your goals.

Describe your work experience (especially if it relates to questions 1-3).

Describe your family (especially if it relates to questions 1-3).

Describe your hobbies and/or interests (especially if it relates to questions 1-3).
Describe any community service or volunteer work.

This prewrite should be at least 3 pages handwritten or two pages typed.
Don't worry about clarity, spelling, or audience. I suggest freewriting.

LPC, Cole
English 1A: Homework due Tuesday, 8/30

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1. List your goals (academic, career, personal)

2. Pick the top 2 – 3 goals and explain how you plan to achieve them

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Describe your work experience (especially if it relates to questions 1-3).

Describe your family (especially if it relates to questions 1-3).

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This prewrite should be at least 3 pages handwritten or two pages typed.
Don't worry about clarity, spelling, or audience. I suggest freewriting.

English 1A, Cole, LPC
Personal Statement: Final Draft Evaluation Sheet
Focus: 35

The writer focuses on one main idea (presented in the thesis).

The body paragraphs contain clear points that develop the main point / thesis.

All of the information in the essay is related to the main idea / thesis.

Notes:

Development: 35

The main idea is explored in depth and fully addresses the prompt.

The writer provide specific supporting details ("shows" rather than "tells.")

The examples showcase the unique aspects of the writer's experience, describing the writer's growth, development, self-analysis.

The introduction "hooks" the reader's attention.

The conclusion answers the question, "So what?"

Notes:

Organization: 10

The ideas flow in a clear, logical manner.

The paragraphing is logical, with each paragraph having a clear "point."

The transitions are effective.

Notes:

Style: 5

The word choice is fresh and appropriate.

The sentence structure is smooth and varied.

Notes:

Mechanics: 15

The sentences are properly constructed, with no grammatical or usage errors.

The punctuation is correct.

The writer has proofread for spelling and typographical errors.

Notes:

Additional Requirements:

The statement is no longer than two pages (typed, double-spaced with 1 inch margins.) Yes No

Attendance at the instructor conference: Yes No

Participation in peer response (having 3 copies of the statement): Yes No

Strongest Aspect of the Essay:

Grade:

Area(s) to focus if rewriting and / or in future papers:

LPC, Cole, English 1A

Personal Statement: Peer Response Questions

Guidelines: Write the answers to these questions (and any other suggestions or comments) on the rough draft of your peers' personal statements (in the margins). Then discuss your feedback with the writer. Finally, sign the drafts when you're through and hand them back to the writer.

Questions to evaluate focus:

The first step to evaluating an essay is making sure you understand what point(s) the writer is trying to make. Use the following questions to evaluate the clarity of the writer's point(s) in the statement.

Early in the statement, is the writer's main point or thesis clear? What will he / she describe and / or prove to the reader? Write down the main point at the top of the paper or underline it if it's clear to you. If it's not clear, make a note.

Does this main point address the prompt? Is it specific enough without being too specific? Make a note in the margins.

Look at each of the body paragraphs: Do they have clear points (often in a topic sentence) that develop the writer's main point? Underline the point of each paragraph. Make a note if the point of a paragraph isn't clear.

Consider the focus overall: Has the writer tried to say too much (or too little)? Is there any information that doesn't seem to relate? If so, note it.

Questions to evaluate development (support of the main point / thesis):

Assuming the focus is fairly clear, then evaluate how well the writer developed her / his ideas, using concrete, specific supporting information (examples, stories, vivid details) and providing clear explanations where needed.

Has the writer used specific information (examples, stories, vivid details) to illustrate the points? Note a place where the writer has provided compelling supporting information and note any places where the writer could add some support.

Is there any place where the writer could more fully explain an example or a story so that the reader understands how it supports the point? If so, make a note.

Overall: Has the writer addressed the prompt? Also, would the statement convince you to give the writer a scholarship? Why or why not? (Make a note).

Questions to evaluate organization:

If the statement is well focused and nicely developed, then it is appropriate to evaluate organization. This involves examining the flow of the writing and the clarity of the paragraphs.

Do the thoughts seem to flow in a logical order, one leading to the next? Note any places that seem choppy or unclear.

Does the paragraphing make sense? Are there too few or too many paragraphs?

If time:

Consider whether the introduction is engaging, “hooking” your interest. After you read it, do you want to read further?

Consider the conclusion, asking yourself whether it sums up the statement, answering the question, “So what?” or “What is meaningful about this statement?”

Please avoid commenting extensively on mechanics, usage, and grammatical issues. This is important, but the writer should seek help from a tutor for this kind of editing. If there are any sentences, however, that are so unclear that you don’t understand what the writer is saying, note them and ask the writer to explain what he / she means.

Thank you for taking part in peer response.

English 1A, Cole, LPC
Personal Statement: Final Draft Evaluation Points
Possible Points: 100

Focus: 35

Development: 35

Organization: 10

Style: 5

Mechanics: 15

Additional Requirements:

The statement is no longer than two pages (typed, double-spaced with 1 inch margins.) Yes No

Attendance at the instructor conference: Yes No (No = loss of 10 points)

Participation in peer response (having 3 copies of the statement): Yes No (No = loss of 10 points)

English 1A, Cole, LPC
Personal Statement: Final Draft Evaluation Points
Possible Points: 100

Focus: 35

Development: 35

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English 1A
Applying for Scholarships:
Some Tips Regarding Personal Statements and Letters of Recommendation

#1: Submit materials on time and be sure you have provided everything required.

The Personal Statement:

The personal statement is also very important. Often, it is the scholarship committee's only chance to hear from you. Scholarship statement requirements differ greatly, but here are a few guidelines (they may be obvious, but are worth saying):

Important: Be sure to fully address the prompt, giving them the information they ask for.

Analyze your audience: Based on what you know about the scholarship, what would the reader most want to know about you? Don't repeat information unnecessarily; for example, if the reader has your transcripts or a letter-writer has showcased certain accomplishments, as the prompt allows, consider focusing on other information, to "fill out" you as the applicant.

Don't fall into giving them a list of your accomplishments unless the prompt specifically asks you to. Instead, if possible, focus on one main story / event and weave other important information into the story.

When telling your story, try to be specific, painting a picture for the reader.

Respect word or page limits.

Type or word-process statements.

Proofread carefully.

Get feedback from at least one other reader. (You may want to work with a tutor in the Writing Center. Be sure to bring the prompt to show the tutor.)

Letters of Recommendation:

The letters of recommendation are extremely important. They should be current and relevant. Here are a few tips to help you as you approach your letter-writers:

Choose letter-writers carefully. People who know you and your best work are usually the best writers.

Ask early: Give the writers as much time as possible. Be sure to let them know the deadline when you request the letter.

Ask the letter-writer what (if any) information she/he might want from you. Some writers may not want anything from you, but be prepared to give the following types of information if requested:

A copy of the prompt / specific information about who will be reading the letter and what the reader(s) will want to know;

A list of facts about you. Some facts might include -- when / how you know the letter writer (with teachers, for example, which class you were in, when you took the class, and how you did in the class), accomplishments, challenges you've faced, GPA, activities you're involved in, any information the readers might be interested in;

Graded work from the class. If you don't have graded work, you might summarize the work / projects you did in the class / on the job.

Work out with the writer how you will handle the mailing of the letter. (Will the writer mail it or will you pick it up?) Offer to provide a stamped envelope if needed.

Write a thank-you note to the letter-writer (preferably at the time that it is due).

