

Personal Statement Strategies to Avoid

It is difficult to explain how to write a personal statement. It is meant to be a very unique and individual endeavor. It can help, however, to have a clear sense of what not to do.

Avoid These Types of Personal Statements

1. **I know...:** Essays where you examine a political theory, philosophy, or aspect of Jurisprudence are a bad idea. The admissions committee wants to know about you. Transcripts can tell of writing ability and intelligence. You will sound overbearing if you attempt to solve some intellectual quagmire, and it probably isn't impressive to these people who see this everyday from their law students.
2. **Manifest Destiny:** Any essay that claims, "I have always been a lawyer" or "people tell me I argue a lot" or "at age ten I wanted to be a lawyer" is also unlikely to be effective. These are common, and do very little outside of confirming the reader's realization that you want to get into that school. They want to know about you, not where you'll end up.
3. **I'll work hard, I promise:** Any essay where you claim that if you can only get in, you will get strait A's, and show them your true abilities, looks silly. You come off looking insecure and insincere. They already have measures of your aptitude. If you have documentable explanations as to why these measures are not accurate then include them, but don't tell them you'll "make up for it if they just let you in." Alternately, although assertiveness is good, there is little to be gained from claiming "I've always been a success, and therefore will be at your school."
4. **Interpretive Guide:** This is very common since many people may have blemishes on their records that they feel uncomfortable about. One should refrain from asking admissions officers to "count this as significant" or that something "shouldn't count." It is their job to make these decisions and they have requested a copy of your transcript for that purpose. HOWEVER, if there is a big problem, don't think out of sight out of mind. If you can, use the personal essay for more positive material, but it is usually acceptable to attach a separate addendum "Explanation of Grades." If you ignore something it will not go away, and admissions officers may question the trouble spot without any mitigating facts.
5. **Recapitulation Essay:** The essay should not be a rehash of all your activities—"and so I did this for three years and it taught me this, and then I did that and it showed me that." The committee knows what your activities are from your application and resume. If one offers sincere insight into you, let that be the single focus of the whole paper.
6. **Cute Essays:** Videotapes might have been cool for college essays, but this is a lot different and a lot more serious. Pictures, art, photos, or essays in the form of a legal briefs or newsletters are not appreciated.
7. **My Contribution to the World:** It sounds very naïve to claim to have your whole life mapped out, and even more so if it takes on some absurdly angelic quality. The "when I grow up I want to be a...and save the rainforest" essay is not a good idea.

8. **Name Dropping:** This comes across as presumptuous. If someone with big money knows you well, have them write you a letter.
 9. **Whining:** No moaning that LSATs are bad or that you had a bad day. If there were mitigating circumstances that affected your LSAT or GPA, explain them, but be sure you take responsibility for your actions. Blaming others will be taken as a sign of immaturity.
 10. **I'm Special:** Any essay that claims "you probably don't get people like me..." is almost definitely wrong.
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Try Instead

Be positive, vulnerable, and introspective. Don't be afraid to look deep into why you are applying to law school and question why the law would be a good fit. Talk to yourself. Be thoughtful and articulate. A good criteria to use is to whether someone could fake what you've written. It has to be genuine. Write something unstrategic, mature, and serious. Relax.