

Writing Your Personal Statement

A Practical Guide for U of R Awards Applications

Student Awards & Financial Aid (SAFA)

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What is a personal statement?

Think of a personal statement as your chance to tell your story—why you deserve to be considered for an award. It's a short essay (roughly 300 words or one page) where you highlight your experiences, goals, and what makes you stand out.

When you apply for scholarships through the Student Awards Management System (SAMS), you'll only write one personal statement that's used for multiple awards. So it's important to write something strong, clear, and reflective of who you are.

Step 1: Brainstorm and Reflect!

Before you start writing, ask yourself:

- What's something important or meaningful I've experienced?
- Have I overcome any challenges?
- What volunteer work or extracurricular activities have I done?
- What are my strengths? What do I care about?
- What are my goals for the future? How will my studies help me get there?

Jot down some quick notes or bullet points. You don't sentences yet—just ideas to work with.

Step 2: Know What the Award is Looking For

Each award may be looking for different things—like leadership, community involvement, academic achievement, or volunteer work. Read the criteria carefully. If an award is based on leadership, be sure to show how you've led a group or made an impact. If it focuses on volunteering, include where you volunteered, what you did, and why it mattered to you.

Step 3: Build Your Statement

Your personal statement can take any format but here's a suggestion of how you could organize yours.

Introduction

- Say who you are and what program you are in (or what you've applied to) and why.
- Share something personal or interesting to catch the reviewer's attention.

Main Body

- Talk about your experiences and how do they connect with the award criteria.
- Be specific! Mention names of organizations, events, roles and programs.
- Use real examples! Show who you are and give examples (ex. responsibilities, empathy, problem-solving).

Conclusion

- Wrap it up by summarizing your strengths and your goals.
- Explain how the award(s) will help you meet your goals and how your education fits into your future.

Final Steps

Your personal statement doesn't have to be perfect - it just needs to be honest, focused, and true to you!

You don't need a long list of achievements. Even small experiences can show big growth. The goal is to give the selection committee a clear picture of who you are beyond grades or test scores.

Writing Tips

- *Be authentic! Be yourself – don't try to sound like someone else.*
- *Use clear, simple language. Avoid overcomplicating things.*
- *Write in the first person (use "I" statements).*
- *Keep it to around 300 words (1 page).*
- *Check your spelling and grammar.*