

General Purpose

- To share information about you: who you are, what you are interested in and why.
 - To state your understanding of and interest in the program, project, or researcher.
 - Some articulation of what you “bring to the table” and what you hope to get out of the experience.
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First Steps

- Read all instructions and verify all deadlines, then FOLLOW THEM! Don’t let a simple mistake be the reason you are not considered!
- If you have questions, email the listed program contact right away for clarity, don’t just assume.
- If not specified in the instructions, limit your statement to 1-2 pages.
- Include a header with your name and contact info on each page, number the pages (if over one page)
- Use the spelling/ grammar check in your software, review your statement, then ask at least one other person to proofread before sending.

Draft the Basics using Bullets

- 3-4 things you want the mentor/ program to know about you: Your name, year of study, major(s), your research/academic interests, your goals, your motivations, your skills, and relevant past experience/s.
- 3-4 things you find interesting or compelling about the program/project/researcher you’re applying to. Do some web-sleuthing to learn more about the mentor, the lab/team, the genre of research, etc. that goes beyond the obvious and that YOU find interesting and can relate your own bullet points to.
- 2-3 connections that tie your personal bullets to the research mentor/project’s bullets to emphasize why you would be a great fit for this opportunity.

Turn Those Bullets into a Personal Statement

- Absent specific guidelines, an effective ratio for your content is 2:2:1 – two parts stuff about you, 2 parts stuff about them (the program/project/mentor), and 1 part about how selecting you for this opportunity will be great.
- How do you want to start? Jump right in with your background? Share a brief anecdote about you?
- Visualize your audience: Will this be read by a researcher or an administrator? Plan your language accordingly. An administrator may not understand overly technical language.
- Organize the statement so it flows from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. Watch out for run-on sentences and needed paragraph breaks.
- Do not be too generic, your statement should be specific to the opportunity you are applying for, not a generic, ‘canned’ statement.
- Make positive statements: ‘I have experience in...’ not ‘I don’t have experience in x, but do have...’
- Active and assertive language is more effective than passive language. Use strong word choices, particularly in verbs and adjectives, like, ‘I am,’ rather than ‘I have always been.’
- Be sure your language reflects who you are. Be authentic to you and how you communicate.