

# How to Write a Successful Statement of Purpose

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# DO

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1. Begin writing your Statement of Purpose weeks before the deadline. Give yourself time to be thoughtful and to rewrite, edit, and revise.
  2. Revise your statement several times.
  3. Explain your academic standing relative to other students and the meaning of any grades that may look low.
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# DO

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4. Carefully read what is required.
  5. Plan your statement carefully.
  6. Get advice from different people.
  7. Revise your statement several times.
  8. Check your grammar and spelling.
  9. Be honest.
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10. Provide insight into what drives you, what is your passion.
  11. Address the particular unique features that attract you to the Fulbright program and to study abroad.
  12. Do discuss your career and life goals.
  13. Revise your statement several times.
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# DO NOT

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1. DON'T merely repeat information that you've provided elsewhere in your application.
  2. DON'T talk about money as a motivating factor in your plans for the future.
  3. DON'T waste your personal statement opportunity with poorly written introduction or conclusion.
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4. DON'T indicate that your goal is to live abroad (If this is your goal you should not be applying for a Fulbright.)
  5. DON'T sound like you will be ready to save Afghanistan or the World if you are able to get a graduate education.
  6. DON'T indicate an interest in a degree or area of study that is not something the program funds.
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# Planning

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# Go the Fulbright Afghanistan web site

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1. Find out what Fulbright will fund
  2. Read the paper on How to Write a Successful Statement of Purpose for Graduate School based on a presentation by: Professor Hower, Cornell University.
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# Use Google to find information

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Look for information on universities and programs in the United States that might be of interest to you. Make notes. Record the url of web sites.

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# The purpose of the Statement of Purpose

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- ❑ To give the reader information on your preparation for the program and your academic interests that relate to your life.
  - ❑ Provide personal stories, intellectual musings, or significant events to bring you and your background to life.
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# The purpose of the Statement of Purpose

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- Your Statement of Purpose should mention your passion in life and focus on things that you have done that illustrate your passion especially as your passion relates to graduate study.
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# The purpose of the Statement of Purpose

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- Your driving motivation at this point of time in your life and how this relates to graduate study, especially in the United States should make up the bulk of the Statement of Purpose.
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# The purpose of the Statement of Purpose

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- ❑ Build in your academic, extra curricular, and social accomplishments as much as you can.
  - ❑ Mention any project, internship or academic research that you might wish to pursue while at the graduate school.
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# The purpose of the Statement of Purpose

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- The Statement of Purpose should lead the reader to your short and long term goals.
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# **Five items to include**

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- 1. A Picture of Your Overall Personality**
  - 2. Academic Background and Work Experience**
  - 3. Continuity**
  - 4. Commitment and Motivation**
  - 5. Communication Skills**
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# 1. A Picture of Your Overall Personality

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- ❑ What are your passions and interests and how are they related to your interest in graduate study?
  - ❑ Don't say 'I am energetic.' Give evidence by the fact that you worked after school every day in your family business and still had time to play football.
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## 2. Academic Background and Work Experience

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- What classes have best prepared you for graduate study and your specific interests?
  - What has been the role of mentors or professors in influencing your academic pursuit?
  - What experiences have significantly enriched, informed, or influenced your graduate study choices (for example language study, unique work opportunities)?
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## 2. Academic Background and Work Experience

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- Remember, that while information on your past work is important, it is most relevant in explaining how it led you to focus on the problems that currently interest you.
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# 3. Continuity

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- How are your past, plans for graduate school, and your hopes for the near and far future related?
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## 4. Commitment and Motivation

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- Rather than simply saying 'I am committed', find a way of showing that you are indeed highly committed and motivated to your proposed field of study.
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# 5. Communication Skills

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- ❑ Your Statement of Purpose provides evidence of your communication skills so invest time in writing, rewriting, and editing this statement.
  - ❑ If you have published something in English, this would also provide evidence of your communication skills.
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# Writing the Essay

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# Stage 1: Preparation

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- Take and write down the important events and facts about your recent life.
  - List the things that you have done and the things that have been important to you.
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## Stage 2: Writing

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- Write several outlines and decide which you like best.
  - Remember the essay has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
  - Outline the things you want to say and from all the material you have written, select the material which you think will go well in your essay.
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## 2: Writing

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- Select the most significant details.**
  - Put that into your outline. Now you are ready to write the essay.
  - As you write the essay you will continue to change the outline. Stay focused on two or three main points.
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# Stage 3: Revision

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- Let the essay sit for a day or two. Then go over it crossing cross out words or sentences.
  - Revise it carefully and write your second draft.
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# Stage 3: Revision

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- Don't expect too much from your first attempts.
  - It takes a lot of work.
  - Do as many drafts as you feel necessary.
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**For every hour you  
spend writing,  
you should spend four  
hours revising.**

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# Spend time on the first paragraph.

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- ❑ Make sure that first paragraph is terrific and interesting. You need to grab attention.
  - ❑ Begin your statement with an interesting lead.
  - ❑ DO NOT BEGIN BY SAYING "I am applying for a Fulbright because . . ."
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# Spend time on the first paragraph.

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- ❑ You are unlikely to be able to write a great first paragraph on your first draft.
  - ❑ Also pay attention to your last paragraph which may be only one sentence - make it a snappy last sentence.
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- Rewrite,
  - revise,
  - edit,
  - outline,
  - begin again,
  - write,
  - rewrite,
  - revise.
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# Proofread

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- Once you think you have written the final draft, proofread it as if you were the editor of a newspaper.
  - Get help.
  - Ask others to read it.
  - Read it aloud to others.
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# Proofread

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- ❑ Not a single mistake must survive, spelling or grammatical.
  - ❑ Look every word up in the dictionary that you are not absolutely sure of.
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# NEXT!

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- ❑ Submit your application and start planning for your graduate program.
  - ❑ Work on your writing.
  - ❑ Learn to touch type (keyboarding without looking at your fingers).
  - ❑ Learn to use word processing software like MS Word or Open Office.
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# References

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- ❑ Web sites University of Idaho, Georgetown, University of California-Berkeley
  - ❑ Statement of Purpose  
<http://www.statementofpurpose.com/>
  - ❑ Many A Group  
[http://www.manyagroup.com/modules.php?name=25c2g\\_how\\_work\\_college\\_app](http://www.manyagroup.com/modules.php?name=25c2g_how_work_college_app)
  - ❑ The Global Educator  
[http://www.theglobaleducator.com/study\\_abroad/pdfs/October%202003%20Statement%20of%20Purpose.PDF](http://www.theglobaleducator.com/study_abroad/pdfs/October%202003%20Statement%20of%20Purpose.PDF)
  - ❑ Perfect Personal Statements  
<http://www.west.net/~stewart/pstips.htm>
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# Recommended Books

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- ❑ Becker, Howard S. (1986). *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - ❑ Peters, Robert L. (1997). *Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning a Master's or Ph.D.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
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