University of California
Personal Statement

www.universityofcalifornia.edu/apply
No single perfect personal statement exists. There is only the personal statement that is right for the person submitting it.

*Remember:* An admissions decision will never be based on the content of a personal statement alone and will ultimately help you in the admissions process.
Common Mistakes

1. Not having a THESIS
2. Writing about events/situations that occurred before 9th grade
3. Writing in flowery prose or descriptive essays
4. Skimming over the surface and not delving deep inside your soul
5. Not taking the assignment seriously
6. Listing events/activities
7. Not getting to the real story
8. Writing too much (*not following directions*)
9. Not selecting the right rough draft readers
10. Forgetting to end each response with how your skills translate to success at the university
1. Have a Thesis

- What are you going to talk about?
- How do you stay on topic?
1. Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
Topics for Freshmen Applicants

REMIXED!

1. Describe your dreams and aspirations and how your world has helped shape them.
Topics for Freshmen Applicants

2. Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?
Topics for Freshmen Applicants

SO WHO ARE YOU?

And how have you demonstrated it?
2. Stick With High School

- Avoid writing about events/situations that occurred before 9th grade
- What can your behavior when you were 7 years old tell me about what you’ve done when you are 17 years old, or what you will do when you are 27 years old?
3. Reject Your Inner Shakespeare

• Use your own words
  – Do NOT try to impress the reader by writing as if you are an SAT Vocabulary Instructor
  – Avoid writing in flowery prose or descriptive essays
  – NO QUOTES!
• No Philosophies
• Get straight to the point
• Not a sample of your writing skills
4. He’s So Superficial!

- MISTAKE: Skimming over the surface and not delving deep inside your soul

- A Strong Personal Statement should demonstrate:
  - Personal qualities that relate to college success
  - Reflection on experiences & activities
  - Meaningful engagement
5. Seriously?

• Though the personal statement is just one section of the application, it’s still a big deal.
• The personal statement is an opportunity to show a side of you that classes and grades cannot reveal by themselves.
• Ways to bomb the personal statement:
  – Starting Thanksgiving weekend
  – Using slang or foul language is not “the business”
  – Being culturally offensive
  – Not replying to both prompts
  – Not replying to any prompts
6. Laundry Lists Are BAD

• We’ve already seen a list of your
  – Classes
  – Exams
  – Honors & Awards
  – Extracurricular activities
  – Volunteer work
  – Paid work
  – Academic preparation programs

• This is an OPPORTUNITY to expand on ONE event/talent/skill/etc.
7. What’s the Real Story?

- The story, in and of itself, is not the main story.
- Only spend 3-4 sentences describing the event.
- The real story is what kind of person you have become due to the experiences that you have had.
- Who are you?
8. How Much is Too Much?

- Two questions
- Students respond to both questions
  - A maximum of 1,000 words total
  - Students should stay within the word limit as closely as they can. A little over—1,012 words, for example—is fine.
- Students choose length of each response
  - If they choose to respond to one prompt at greater length, we suggest the shorter answer be no less than 250 words.
- Got more to say?
  - Use Additional Comments box for clarification, expansion on important details:
    - Additional names
    - Visa issues
    - If you are in Foster Care
  - Describe anything else that you have not had the opportunity to include elsewhere in your application.
    - 500-word limit
9. Who Likes Red Ink Anyway?

MISTAKE: Choosing your rough-draft-readers by who you think will give you the least amount of corrections to make

Do not be afraid of constructive criticism
Embrace continual improvement
Have more than one rough-draft reader
English teachers can be one reader but should not be the only reader
10. What Kind of College Student Will You Be?

- Characteristics UC looks for:
  - Thoughtfulness
  - Incisive reflection -- some sense of who you are
  - Personal qualities including, but not limited to:
    - Self-discipline
    - Leadership
    - Commitment to others
    - Maturation
    - Tenacity
    - Informal Leaders
    - Demonstrate a Sensitivity for Differences
  - UC is a RESEARCH institution and looks for characteristics within its students that best represent and embody it.
UCI - Living Our Values

- Respect
- Intellectual curiosity
- Integrity
- Commitment
- Empathy
- Appreciation
- Fun
Questions?

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This presentation courtesy of the UC Irvine Early Academic Outreach Program