Components of a good personal statement or essay:

1. Most important of all!!!

**NEVER TELL THEM anything**. Always **SHOW** **THEM**. Don’t say, “I am an organized and disciplined leader and a team player.” Boring! Give them a short example that illustrates how you display those skills: “As lead volunteer for the 4th of July parade in my town, I put in more than 30 hours of service, successfully procured over $5000 in donations and organized the 50-float parade.”

1. Always feel free to **USE MORE DETAIL rather than less**. *Tell a story!* Make the reader invest in you and your case. There are dozens to hundreds of people who all want the position, money, internship etc. Why should they care about *you*? They won’t, unless you draw them in with the how, the what, the when etc a weave a story any human could relate to.

IE if you’re desperate for money for school, don’t just say “my family can’t afford it.” That doesn’t make me want to support you. Sorry. How about, “My seven-person family survives on one income. Currently, my parents are putting three of the five of us children through college. As the third of these children, the financial strain on my family is incredible and it is very difficult for me to get the funds I need. Your scholarship will contribute towards room and board ….etc”. NOW I feel your story and I want to help!

1. If you have more than 500 words, tell me how you came to the point where you are today. **WHERE/HOW DID IT ALL START**? Re-live the moment where you realized you wanted to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. OR tell of the first time you sat in class (or wherever) and felt deep in your heart that you wanted to \_\_\_\_\_\_.

IE “As nerdy as it sounds, from the first moment of my first experiment in Bio 101 I knew I was in love.” No matter what you want to do, explaining why will contribute to the story of who you are and why you’re headed where you’re headed. Whether it’s an internship, application to college, job application, Peace Corps, etc. ENGAGE ME! Make me interested in you!

1. **USE THE PROGRAM NAME**! As you apply, it’s a nice touch to reference the program specifically in your essay. (In these examples I say “the program” to keep it generic.) “As an intern for the Mt Sinai School of Medicine’s SMART program, I hope to…”, or “once a student in UPenn’s McDonald School of Nursing…” etc. This help you picture *yourself* there, and it helps them know you’re not just applying for a program, you’re applying for *their* program specifically. Not any program will do. You want THEM.

1. Talk about **HOW THE PROGRAM WILL BENEFIT YOU** (you could also include how you will benefit the program.) HUGE HUGE HUGE!! Get online, find the application or “About Us” section and **DO YOUR RESEARCH!** I like to take a snippet from their description of an ideal candidate and insert it into my essay. “Your program seeks out previously trained, motivated graduate students who want to engage in intense linguistics research. I received my BA in linguistics from \_\_\_\_. In earning my degree, I also completed over 250 hours of research under the mentorship of Dr. Rupen.” *Tell them how you fit their criteria.* If you don’t fit (which happens!), tell why you’re still an outstanding candidate and what skills you have that make you an appropriate choice regardless.

1. **SHOW YOUR PREPARATION** for the moment you’re about to enter. “This year will mark my third year of independent biomedical research at Emory University’s nationally recognized Whitehead Biomedical Research Facility. My mentor will attest to my zeal and love for knowledge. We have attended over 15 conferences to improve upon and acquire techniques in our specific field of \_\_\_.” Here, you’re showing that you have shown interest long before you applied and that you are *well* worth the company’s/school’s investment. Even if you’ve only minimally prepared or have little experience, show what you’ve done and how even now you are preparing!

1. In personal statements and for post undergraduate applications, it’s important to **BRIEFLY OUTLINE A POSSIBLE FUTURE**.
   1. Where do you hope to be in the next 5 years?
   2. What’s your ultimate (career/life) plan?
   3. How, *specifically*, does the program contribute to your future?
   4. How do you plan on giving back to society? What do you hope your role is in the nest 5 years? 20?

                            Any order is fine for these!

1. **SHOW KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SITUATION.** If you claim to care about something, show that you’ve done research and though about how you can contribute to a solution. IE “World poverty and hunger are important to me.” WRONG! “Approximately 2 billion people go to bed hungry every night. For the equivalent of 4 US dollars a day, five of those people could go to be less hungry.”

1. **WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE MONEY/OPPORTUNITY?** Turn the skills you’ll gain into solutions! What do you hope to do once you’ve attended the school or program? “The John Vogen Internship’s core curriculum will equip me with strategies and resources to tackle today’s \_\_\_\_\_ challenges. The weekly seminars will introduce me to a network of successful professionals…”…

GODSPEED! Show some flavor and let your personality shine through and have FUN!