Personal Statement for Law School

The third most important part of your application is the personal statement. The LSAT score is given the most weight and the GPA is second. Although admissions representatives say they read the personal statement first and look at the LSAT and GPA afterward, if you don’t fit into the ranges appropriate for that school, you won’t receive serious consideration. Letters of recommendation are considered the fourth most important.

If the school you are applying to has specific instructions concerning the personal statement, be sure to follow them exactly. While you should put your best effort into the personal statement, after all it is your first writing assignment for law school, realize that a mediocre statement probably won’t hurt. On the other hand, a poorly written one could push to denial and an outstanding one could determine admission.

The personal statement is a substitute for a personal interview. It should be new material not covered by the other pieces of information in your file. For example, it shouldn’t be a rehash of your resume. You should tell them what is unique about you. Law schools want a wide diversity of backgrounds and experiences in the students admitted. What qualities, skills, or experiences does the applicant possess that would be considered important to the study and practice of law.

The main thing you can and should do in a personal statement is show off your ability to write well. Remember the most important tool a lawyer uses is language. Don’t be too creative and certainly avoid being cute. On the other hand don’t be boring and have endless sentences that begin with I. The statement shouldn’t be longer than two pages of double spaced material with reasonable margins in a font of a size that is easy to read, unless the directions ask for something else. Stick strictly to the truth, don’t embellish, blame, complain, or whine. A personal statement may not be the ideal place to explain grades or less than stellar LSAT scores. You can use a different page for that and the two (if necessary) should be on one sheet not two.

Stories about your experiences that have shaped and made you learn and grow can be excellent ways to tell about yourself and showcase your writing skills. Obstacles and circumstances are taken into consideration, but gender, race, etc. alone are not enough to gain admissions.

If the application asks for ‘optional’ statements, consider them mandatory for you. They give you an opportunity to provide more information. You will probably gain from writing them and there is little chance of loss. They are looking for what makes you different.

Dodge clichés, beware of quotations; misspellings and grammatical errors are absolutely unacceptable. This must be a polished piece of writing.