

PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is a very difficult and personal piece of writing. Please know that you are not alone in this process. YU offers many resources to help ensure that your personal statement is as strong as it possibly can be. Students should review their draft statements with the YU Pre-Law Advising Offices, the Career Center, or the Writing Center. Prepare to devote a lot of time to this section. **DO NOT LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE.**

Law School personal statement prompts are often vague and do not provide a lot of direction. Many schools simply ask applicants to write provide a two page statement (double-spaced) about themselves to enable the admissions committee to better evaluate the applicant. In general law schools will leave the content of the statement to each applicant's discretion.

Try not to be overwhelmed by this task. This is your chance to shine and to show the law school that you will be a vital member of the incoming class. Personal statements are one of the most common ways to make up for a borderline LSAT score. An excellent personal statement will make an admissions officer feel an emotional connection to you and often will provoke him/her to fight for your candidacy when the time comes. You don't want to miss out on this opportunity.

So what do you write about? First determine which qualities you want to highlight. Is it your intellectual abilities? Your leadership skills? Your capacity to endure adversity? Your ability to stay calm under pressure? Your strong values? The next step is to think about a way to showcase these qualities without sounding arrogant or contrived. As the adage goes, "show, don't tell." Let the admissions committee reach your desired conclusion on its own. In other words, guide your audience but do not lecture.

Each personal statement is unique and should be discussed on a one-on-one basis, but here are some pointers to get you started:

DO

- Start early
- Discuss your topic with the Pre-Law Adviser before you invest a lot of time in writing it
- Hook your reader in the first paragraph
- Revise, revise, revise
- Write sincerely
- Remember your audience
- Make your personal statement unique to you
- Incorporate specifics and details
- Write clearly and grammatically
- Make sure it flows
- Use all available resources (Writing Center, Office of Pre-Law Advising, and the Career Center.)

DON'T

- Exceed the page or word limit
- Write about writing your personal statement
- Focus on the negative
- Write the name of the wrong school
- Write about why you want to go to law school if you don't have a clear reason for doing so.
- Use clichés

Still not sure what to write about? It might be helpful to try a free-write on each of these prompts. Set a timer for 30 minutes and write whatever comes to mind without worrying about grammar or word usage.

Personal Statement Prompts:

1. What do you remember most from your childhood?
2. What was the best/ worst piece of advice you've ever received? Did you follow it?
3. Has someone influenced your life in a meaningful way? Describe your reaction to this person and how you changed? (Make sure you are writing about yourself and not your mentor)
4. Describe a mistake you made and how you have matured because of it. (Be careful with this one. You want to make sure you are painting yourself in a positive light.)
5. What would you do if you were not afraid of failure?
6. Has an event in your life caused you to reevaluate an idea you've always thought to be true?
7. What do you wish your childhood/young adulthood could have looked like?
8. What difficult situations have you overcome?
9. What are you passionate about? Why?
10. How would your friends describe you as a person if they knew you were not listening?
11. What is your strongest personal trait?
12. What are the lessons you have learned?
13. What values are important to you? Why?
14. Did you ever have to make a difficult decision? Why was it so difficult? Are you happy with your choice?
15. Do you look at problems/ issues differently than other people?
16. Does someone look up to you? What have you done for them? How has this impacted you?
17. What is your greatest accomplishment to date? What do you wish it could be?