

# WRITING RÉSUMÉS

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### **Understand the real purpose for a résumé**

- A résumé is a personal ad designed to sell an employer on giving you an interview.
- Good résumés get interviews, not jobs.

### **Know what skills and abilities you can offer an employer.**

- Self-assessment is the first step in effectively selling yourself.

### **Know the key skills and duties for the position you want.**

- Demonstrate the skills you have acquired from activities, classes or projects, even if you don't have direct experience.

### **Write targeted, not generic résumés**

- Different jobs need different résumés. It's important to read the job description carefully.

### **Figure out what selling points you have and present them attractively.**

- What skills traits experiences will be most convincing to the employer?
- Show how seemingly unrelated work experience can give skills an employer wants.

### **Put the most important information near the top.**

- A résumé gets glanced over quickly.
- Make it easy for an employer to see what you have to offer.

### **Be absolutely truthful, but don't be too modest, either.**

- Now is the time to brag!
- Tell about your accomplishments and good qualities.

### **Focus on achievements, not job duties.**

- Show what improvements, suggestions or accomplishments you have made.
- Describe what kind of worker you were.
- Make it easy for an employer to visualize you succeeding.

### **Avoid using résumé templates on Word.**

- They make your résumé look canned and revisions can be very difficult.

### **Make the format easy for an employer to skim.**

- Use boldface, bullets, and lots of white space.
- Choose 10 to 12 point Arial or Times New Roman as the font.

### **Try to keep it to one page.**

- Sum up your qualifications in one page.
- If you have significant related experience, it's OK to go to 2 pages.

### **Make a version of your résumé that is Internet friendly.**

- Use key words from the job description that will get your résumé pulled from a computer search.
- Name your résumé so an employer can locate it quickly: "SueJones.doc"
- Make the résumé available in MS Word, the most commonly used software for employers.

### **Absolutely, positively no typos or errors.**

- Spellcheck.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread again, then have a friend or a Career Counselor
- proofread it.

### **Every résumé needs a cover letter.**

- Even electronic résumés need a cover email.



### *How long should a resume be?*

*Most new college grads keep their resume to one page. A resume is not a job application, and does not have to include all your experience or jobs, just the ones relevant to the position you are seeking.*

# PARTS OF A RÉSUMÉ

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### Contact Information

Put your name at the top of the résumé, along with an e-mail address. Be sure the e-mail address is professional. Include your campus address or permanent address, with zip codes and phone number, including area code. You don't need two sets of addresses. Use the one you want an employer to have. Make sure your voicemail has a professional sounding message.

### Objective (Not used when creating a graduate school résumé)

Be clear and to the point about the kind of job or industry you are seeking. "Seeking a full -time position in public relations, utilizing my creative and communication skills and ability to think outside the box." is focused. Employers are really turned off by generic objectives.

### Education

List the college and location on the first line. List the specific degree you will complete (write it out) and the major, follow it with the month and year of the expected graduation date. On the next line, list the concentration or minor. Your GPA is optional, but definitely include it if it is over 3.0. You can also list scholarships, honors and awards, or they can go under a separate section.

### Related Coursework (Optional)

This is usually good if using your résumé for a graduate school application. It is great to separate them in an Excel box provided on Optional Resume.

### Related Experience

Starting with your most recent work experience, list the name of the company or organization along with the city and state. Underneath this heading, give your title, then include the dates of employment by writing out the month and year. Use short phrases with action verbs in bullet format. Complete sentences are not necessary. Stress what you achieved, learned, or what your supervisors were especially pleased about, so employers can see what kind of worker you are. Remember experience includes volunteer, campus activities, and research work or projects done at school if they show skills related to the objective.

### Activities and Honors (or Campus Activities )

Use this section to show the employer how you have balanced different activities or demonstrated leadership on campus or in the community. Highlight the most relevant activities and honors. List only what is relevant to the job you are seeking.

### Skills

Most employers prefer to see your "hard" skills such as computer/technical skills, language skills, and specialized training.

### References

These should NOT be listed on the résumé! Instead, list references on a separate sheet to take with you to the interview. Make sure you speak to your references before listing them, and get all their information correct. You should have at least three references who can speak highly of your work ethic, ability to do the job, and your character. See example below:

Dr. Fred Sickel  
Professor  
Back To School University  
257 Education Way, Orlando, FL  
getdegree@bsu.edu  
256-598-3128

# MARKETING YOUR SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

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An effective résumé markets your skills and experience. Your résumé should focus on accomplishments and transferable skills. To sell yourself, you need to know three things:

- *What you learned or accomplished through the experience.*
- *What difference you made to the employer.*
- *What skills the prospective employer is seeking.*

Knowing these three things will help you transform your résumé from a list of job titles into a personal **marketing tool**. The same technique should be used for volunteer and campus activities. Notice how the **examples** below take a basic résumé entry and expand it to **highlight** skills and successes. Whenever possible, put your accomplishments in concrete terms, such as “Increased attendance by 13%” or “Managed database of 400+ customers.”

### **Basic style:**

#### **The Fashion Boutique, Lakeland, FL**

*Sales Associate, May 20xx - Present*

- Provided customer service and handled register
- Assisted with clothing displays

### **Improved Style:**

#### **The Fashion Boutique, Lakeland, FL**

*Sales Associate, May 20xx - Present*

- Provided sales, merchandising, and customer service in busy clothing store, proofing cash register with low error rate
- Interacted successfully with over 30 customers daily, achieving \$300 to \$500 in daily sales
- Assigned managerial responsibility for closing store
- Developed loyal clientele, increasing sales by 15%
- Resolved customer complaints diplomatically

### **Basic Style:**

#### **Chili's Bar and Grill, Orlando, FL**

*Server, Summers of 2001-20xx*

- Waited on tables during peak business hours
- Performed additional cleaning duties

### **Improved Style:**

#### **Chili's Bar and Grill, Orlando, FL**

*Server, Summers of 2001-20xx*

- Demonstrated suggestive selling to promote daily specials
- Selected to train new employees on providing excellent customer service
- Named Employee of the Month twice

### **Basic Style:**

#### **Varsity Tennis Team Member, Fall 20xx - Present**

*Captain, Spring 20xx- Fall 20xx*

- Led team to conference title

### **Improved Style:**

#### **Varsity Tennis Team Member, Fall 20xx - Present**

*Captain, Spring 20xx - Fall 20xx*

- Dealt with players' personal challenges and varying skill levels to lead team to first-ever conference title
- Coordinated daily practices in absence of coach
- Served as liaison between coach and players

### **Basic Style:**

#### **Fellowship Church, Bartow, FL**

*Youth Worker, Summer 20xx*

- Assisted youth minister with summer programs
- Led puppet ministry

### **Improved Style:**

#### **Fellowship Church, Bartow, FL**

*Youth Worker, Summer 20xx*

- Created new contact system about upcoming activities, resulting in 23% increase in attendance
- Evaluated and selected scripts for puppet ministry; led weekly rehearsals
- Contacted local churches and social service groups to schedule puppet shows; expanded ministry into 3 new churches

### **Basic Style:**

#### **Warner University, Lake Wales, FL**

*Resident Advisor, August 20xx - Present*

- Served as advisor to 36 freshmen
- Planned monthly programs

### **Improved Style:**

#### **Warner University, Lake Wales, FL**

*Resident Advisor, August 20xx - Present*

- Advised, counseled, and led 36 freshman students
- Trained in conflict resolution, handling emergency situations, and effective communication skills
- Planned informative and appropriate monthly programming to assist students adjusting to college

# WRITING PERSUASIVE COVER LETTERS

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### **Purpose:**

#### **Persuade readers to review your résumé.**

- The process differs from writing a résumé.
- A cover letter is a unique letter to a specific person for a particular reason.

#### **Recognize the importance of the letter.**

- It is your first opportunity to
- make a good impression as a potential employee.
- Use good stock white paper for both cover letter and résumé.
- Sign your letter in black ink.

#### **The cover letter is a formal document.**

- Address your letter to a specific individual.
- Use their correct title and business address.

#### **Keep your letter brief, clear, and to the point.**

- Make certain you have the correct spelling.
- Avoid jargon and overly complex sentences.

#### **Make it easy for someone to understand “who” you are.**

- Letters should be limited to one page.
- Introduce yourself and clearly define your situation
  - \* graduating Senior
  - \* Junior seeking an internship
  - \* recent graduate
  - \* an alumni with professional experience

#### **Design your letter to be work and employer centered.**

- Cover letters should address the needs of the employer, not your own.
- Research the company to show you understand their priorities.
- Be ready to make a contribution to the organization.

#### **Do your homework!**

- Use the job description to determine which skills are needed for the position.
- Highlight your experiences and accomplishments relating to those skills.

#### **Convey your important qualifications.**

- Include academic accomplishments
- Personal attributes communicate your potential to become a valuable asset.

#### **Be positive!**

- Make certain the content, tone, and word choice convey a positive attitude
- You are marketing yourself; so SELL the employer the idea of granting you an interview.

#### **Be perfect!**

- *Carefully check for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.*
- *Have a friend, professor, or career counselor review it before sending.*

*Writing appropriate cover letters can be one of the most difficult parts of finding a job. A well written, persuasive letter allows the employer to see how well you can think on paper, and can also lead to the all important interview...*

# COVER LETTER GENERAL OUTLINE

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

1.25"

2"

Your Street Address  
City, state, Zip

1"

Date (Fully written. ex: March 15, 2011)

Name of Contact Person  
Title of Contact Person  
Name of Company  
Street Address  
City, State, ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

**OPENING PARAGRAPH (1)**

**MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS (2)**

**PROFESSIONAL PARAGRAPH (3)**

**CLOSING PARAGRAPH (4)**

Sincerely,

¶

(Sign here)

¶

Your full name typed

Enclosure  
(You are referring to your enclosed resume)

# COVER LETTER GENERAL OUTLINE

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

(1) The opening paragraph should arouse the interest of the employer. State why you are writing, (i.e. in response to an advertisement, referral from a contact, knowledge of position opening). If you have been referred by an individual, be sure to mention the person's name. Offer information to show your interest in the position and in this specific organization. You should also include the title of the position for which you are applying.

(2) The middle paragraphs should create a desire on the part of the employer to want to read your résumé and learn more about you. Point out several key accomplishments on your enclosed résumé, and highlight qualifications and skills that would make you a good candidate for the position. Take care not to repeat your résumé verbatim, but refer the reader to important points of interest relating to the job description. (Paragraphs 2 & 3 can be incorporated into one for most college students)

(3) This paragraph requires some homework on your part. Explain why you want to work for this specific organization. If you are not familiar with the organization, use the library or the Internet to do some research. You might even contact the employer to request brochures or other informational materials. Most employers are impressed by the fact that you would care enough to gather information before applying for a position. (Paragraphs 2 & 3 can be incorporated into one for most college students)

(4) The closing paragraph should pave the way for the interview by suggesting an action plan. Request an appointment and offer to call the employer during a specific time period. Let the employer know where you can be reached by providing your phone number and your email address.

**TIPS:** When writing a cover letter try not to start too many sentences with the word "I". In the first and last paragraphs you might need to use it in a couple of sentences, but for the most part try to reword your sentences so they don't start with T. Also, try to watch your use of the word "that". Most of the time this word is used as a filler and it is absolutely NOT necessary. By following these tips your letter will sound a lot smoother and professional.



# SAMPLE COVER LETTER COMPONENTS

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip

Date (Fully written. ex: March 15, 2011)

Ms. Ann James  
Director of Public Relations  
Current Events, Inc.  
51 Lemon Street  
Lakeland, FL 33802

Dear Ms. James:

I am writing to apply for the position of Event Planner at Current Events, Inc., which was advertised in the Career Center at Warner University. As a graduating senior, I am interested in joining a dynamic, community-oriented organization like Current Events, Inc., where I could make significant creative contributions. Current Events, Inc.'s focus on local organizations and activities appeals to me, as I am interested in remaining in Polk County after graduation.

¶

My interest in event planning began when I served as an intern on the promotion committee for Mayfaire-by-the-Lake Art Festival in Lakeland. My internship position required great attention to detail, as I was responsible for coordinating vendor reservations, booth assignments, and all related correspondence. In collaboration with several other interns, I recruited over 100 food and art vendors, and participated in the design of security plans to ensure the safety of guests at the event. In addition to my internship, I have worked on the orientation committee at Warner University for three summers, planning social events for both students and parents of incoming freshman classes. Through my enjoyable internship and orientation experiences, I was able to express my creative ideas and refine my presentation skills, which have prepared me to be a successful Event Planner.

Enclosed is my resume with additional information regarding my qualifications. I will contact you within the next week to see if an interview can be arranged. If you wish to reach me prior to that time, please call me at (863)-680-1234 or email at [first.last@go.warner.edu](mailto:first.last@go.warner.edu) I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Sincerely,

(Sign here)

Your full name typed

Enclosure



# PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### Be Prepared.

- Select appropriate attire
- Research company thoroughly.
- Prepare a list of questions.
- Bring a copy of your résumé in a portfolio
- Have a separate page with references.
- Practice answering sample interview questions.

### Make a Good First Impression.

- Be prompt.
- Be yourself.
- Attend to your nonverbal behavior.
- Maintain eye contact with interviewer.
- Take the first few minutes to develop rapport with your interviewer.
- Appear poised, yet comfortable. If you do this, you'll be setting the stage for success!
- Emphasize Your Skills and Accomplishments.
- Focus on your skills and accomplishments:
  - \*college coursework
  - \*volunteer work
  - \*co-curricular activities
  - \*computer and language skills \*internships and/or work experiences
- Describe how your transferable skills fit in with the position. For example: \*communication
  - \*interpersonal
  - \*organizational
  - \*analytical and problem solving skills

### Focus on the positive!

- When referring to weaknesses, recognize those things you feel you need to work on and quickly shift to actions you have taken to improve in this area.
- Specific examples can be helpful to illustrate your progress.

### Bring samples of your work.

- If you are in a field such as: graphic design, photography, studio art, education, or communication, where a sample of your work would be helpful, create a portfolio and bring it to the interview. (Create a port)

### Prepare for Various Types of Interviews.

- The Behavioral Interview. The interviewer will provide you with a scenario and ask how you would handle a certain situation.
- Preparing for these types of questions will provide a quick reference to previous relevant experiences. (See following page.)

### Use the STAR Method.

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question

- **Situation:** Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. Be sure to give detailed information.
- **Task:** What goal were you working toward?
- **Action:** Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on **YOU**. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.
- **Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

### Close with Confidence.

- The beginning and ending of the interview can be the most crucial aspects of the interview.
- End your interview with confidence.
- Thank the interviewer for their time.
- Ask when you may expect to hear back from the employer.

### Ask for the job! State your interest in the position!



*You have sent out your resume & cover letter and the employer has contacted you to schedule an interview. Here are some tips to ensure that it is a success!*



# PREPARING FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

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### How are Behavioral Interviews different from Traditional Interviews?

- Today, more than ever, every hiring decision is critical. Interviewers will ask questions based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior.
- The interview will be a more structured process concentrating on areas important to the interviewer and company.
- The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information, and works from a profile of desired behaviors needed for success on the job.
- If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position.

### Examples of Behavioral Questions.

*"Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the team members wasn't carrying his or her weight."*

*"Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it."*

*"Give an example of when you had to work on more than one project at a time and explain how you handled getting things completed in a timely manner."*

### Follow-up questions will test for consistency.

These questions will also determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

*"Can you give me an example?" "What did you do or say?" "What were you thinking?" "What was your role?"*

### Putting it all together.

A possible response for the question, *"Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her own weight,"* might go as follows:

*"I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe. One of our team members wasn't showing up for our lab sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team, and asked if there was anything I could do. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him out. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for the help. We finished our project on time, and got a 'B' on it."*

### Don't Forget the Basics.

- The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only.
- It is always important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, a firm handshake, and eye contact.
- There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, and enthusiasm.

### Follow-up with a Thank You Note

- Take this opportunity to clarify a topic discussed in the interview.
- Reaffirm your interest in the organization and position.
- Send a thank you note to everyone you interviewed with on the day of your interview.



*There is more than just a traditional interview. Here are some tips if you are having a behavioral interview, so that you will be on track to get the job you really want!*

# QUESTIONS TO EXPECT AND ASK

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### EXPECT...

Questions you should be prepared to answer during your interview:

#### **“So, tell me a little about yourself.”**

Talk about your experiences, qualifications, and accomplishments— not your childhood, family, or hobbies. Keep bringing everything back to the position for which you are applying.

#### **“In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to the company?”**

Tell your employer about the skills you have listed on your résumé. Name a skill, and tie it to the position. Tell them about your positive outlook and dedication to getting the job done!

#### **“What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?”**

Be honest, emphasize the strengths, and when mentioning a weakness, be ready to back it up with examples showing how you're trying to improve in that area. Better yet, turn it into a positive.

#### **“Why should I hire you?”**

Let the interviewer know about your motivation, desire to be successful, and to help the company grow. Tell them how you can be an asset to them!

#### **“What motivates you to do a good job?”**

Money is not a good answer. A good answer would be something like, “having responsibilities and being acknowledged when the job is done right.”

#### **“What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment in college?”**

Tell the truth, and try to link it to the job position

#### **“Do you have any questions for me?”**

“Yes, thank you, I do have a Few questions...” Write them down and bring them with you in a portfolio to the interview, along with your résumé! (See next column for sample questions.)

### ASK...

Questions to ask your potential employer:

1. If hired, would I be filling a newly created position, or replacing someone?
  2. Would you describe a typical work day and the things I would be doing?
  3. How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
  4. Can someone in this job be promoted? If so, to what position?
  5. How would I get feedback on my job performance, if hired?
  6. If hired, would I report directly to you, or to someone else?
  7. What could I say or do to convince you to offer me this job?
  8. What is the next step in the hiring process?
- Never ask any questions about salary, vacations, holidays with pay, or sick days. Wait for the managers to bring up the issue of wages. When they ask what salary you expect, ask what the standard salary for your qualifications is. Force the managers to throw out the first figure. if the figure is what you want—grab it. if the figure is too low, explain your financial situation and try to negotiate an increase.

*The way you answer questions asked by the interviewer can have a great impact positively or negatively. With these sample questions, you will be ready to answer with confidence and ease!*

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS!

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### MEN



- A two piece suit in navy or another dark color.
- Have a tie in a simple pattern that matches the color of your suit.
- Ironed button down dress shirt. (white or pastel)
- Polished dress shoes in a dark color.
- No earrings! If you normally wear one, take it out.
- Get a haircut. Short hair always fares best.
- Have clean, trimmed finger nails.
- Wear minimal cologne.
- Bring a portfolio with your résumés!

### WOMEN



- A neutral colored suit in navy or another dark color with a skirt.
- Skirt length should be a little below the knee & never shorter than above the knee.
- Blouses should be modest (no inappropriate cleavage).
- Pantyhose should be flawless & a conservative color.
- Basic pumps with 1"-2" heel.
- Simple accessories. No visible body piercings besides earlobes.
- Make-up should be minimal & in conservative tones.
- Wear minimal perfume.
- Bring a portfolio with your résumés!

## REMEMBER TO THANK YOUR INTERVIEWER!

**Don't wait to send a thank-you to your interviewer! Send one right away because they're very important! In a study of 150 senior executives from the nation's 1,000 largest companies, 88% of them consider a post-interview thank-you note as influential as evaluating the candidates themselves!**

Your Name  
Title  
Address Date

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name):

Thank you so much for meeting with me on (Date) to discuss the (position title) you have available. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about (company's name) and to discuss how my qualifications can meet your needs.

Becoming a part of your team would be a great opportunity. If considered for (position title), I can assure you I would be a reliable employee and an asset to (company's name). I look forward to hearing from you regarding your decision.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

**What is an informational interview?** An Informational Interview is a meeting in which an individual asks for advice rather than employment. The individual uses the interview to gather information on the field, find employment leads and expand their professional network. This differs from a job interview because the job seeker asks the questions. While the individual initiates the interview, they must still follow the basic guidelines for interview etiquette. They must arrive promptly, dress appropriately, prepare informational questions, and make a good first impression.

### How to arrange for an Information Interview

- Network through friends, family, co-workers, the Career Center to prepare a list of potential candidates to Interview.
- You can also prepare a list of companies or organizations which interest you and do some research to determine which of their employees might best provide information about your specific areas of interest.
- Career Center counselors can help you brainstorm and provide some leads.
- Prioritize your list, based on areas of greatest interest. Select a couple of individuals to contact.
- Contact the person you would like to interview. Identify yourself as a student at Warner University, let them know you are interested in the career they have chosen, and politely ask if you could set-up a 20-30 minute meeting with them to discuss their career and answer some questions.

### Preparing for the informational interview

- Think about what exactly you want to learn from the interview and select questions accordingly.
- See some sample questions below.
- Dress appropriately for the job you are investigating.
- Arrive no later than 10 minutes prior to your scheduled time.
- It is a good idea to bring a copy of your résumé in case it is requested, but do NOT approach the interview as if you are job searching. This is about gathering information ONLY!

### Following-up after the interview

- Evaluate your experience. What did you learn? Did it prompt new questions? Did the interview reinforce your career interests? How good a “fit” was this career to your interests?
- Keep names, addresses, and phone numbers of your contact for future reference.
- Send a brief thank-you note to each individual you interviewed, thanking them for their time.

### Some possible questions for an informational Interview

- What is a typical day like for you?
- What is the most satisfying part of your job? Least satisfying part?
- Can you please describe your career path?
- Would you choose to enter this field again? If not, what other field would you choose?
- What is your educational background?
- What courses best prepared you for your position?
- Knowing what you know now about your field, would you have done it differently?
- What are your most valued skills in this field? How can I best obtain these skills while I am in college?
- How difficult would it be for you to change to a similar job in another business, industry or setting?
- What is the most common entry-level position in this field?
- What was the progression of jobs you had to get to your present position?
- What is your biggest responsibility, and how did you learn to handle this responsibility?
- How much travel and/or relocation is required in this field?
- Can you suggest other people I might be able to interview who might have similar career interests?

# GRADUATE SCHOOL

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

**There are many factors to consider when thinking about grad school. Here are some tips to help you make a decision.**

**Is graduate school really the right step toward your future?**

**First, consider these questions:**

Do you have a clear idea of the career you want to pursue?

Is a graduate degree a requirement for your career, will it make employment easier, or could it make your job search difficult?

Who wants you to go to grad school? Is it your motivation and interests or are you responding to advice from others?

Is there another avenue for continued learning?

Could you gain the marketable skills and knowledge you want through professional seminars, workshops, or community college classes?

What can you do with your Bachelor of Art or Bachelor of Science degree? If you are looking for some options, come to the Career Center to explore your career choices!

**Examine your reasons for going to graduate or professional school:**

Is it to further investigate an area of interest? Is it to bolster your credentials? Is it to extend your academic experience? Do you have the financial commitment it takes?

**Next, select an academic focus.**

- What could you study, read, write, and discuss that would keep you interested 2-5+ years?
- Have you explored the field through journals and talking to people in the field?
- Have you studied the course outlines of programs of interest?
- Have you looked over the textbooks you will be using in the program?
- Have you talked to current students in the program?

**Develop a list of potential schools. Try out these helpful websites! Apply to more than one school!**

Peterson's Guides to Graduate Schools:  
<http://www.petersons.com>

GradSchools.com:  
<http://www.gradschools.com>

Graduate Guide:  
<http://graduateguide.com>

College Source:  
<http://www.collegesource.org>

Also, check out the Career Center website:  
<http://www.warner.edu/careercounseling>



# HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

Through a personal statement, you introduce yourself to the university; it reflects your personality and intellect. It is important you read each question carefully and make every effort to understand and respond to it with well-considered responses and in a persuasive enough manner to hold the reader's interest.

### 1. Understand and Explain Yourself

One of the main problems when writing is applicants fail to take a thorough and analytical look at themselves and their objectives. Admission committee members are looking for interesting, insightful, revealing, and non-generic essays that suggest you have successfully gone through a process of careful reflection and self-examination.

### 2. Set Yourself Apart

Committees are looking for something PERSONAL and ANALYTICAL. This means sharing information you rarely share with others and assessing your life more critically than usual. This approach is key to a successful personal statement.

**Exercise:** In order to begin writing your personal statement, your story, you'll need to answer some basic questions to prepare yourself.

#### Questions:

- What is special, unique, distinctive, or impressive about you or your life story? What details of your life (personal or family issues/ history, any genuinely notable accomplishments, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you originally become interested in this field and what have you learned about it, and about yourself; which has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction you are well suited to this field? This does not mean you should write, "Why I want to be a lawyer." Instead, tell what insights you have gained from certain experiences reinforcing your decision to go to law school.
- How have you learned about this field, through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, internships, or conversations with people already in the field.
- If work experiences have consumed significant periods of time during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has the work contributed to your personal growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record you should explain (great grades and mediocre LSAT scores, for example, or a distinct improvement in your GRA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (e.g., economic, familial, physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristic (integrity, compassion, persistence, for example) do you possess that would enhance your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document you have these characteristics?
- What skills (leadership, communicative, analytical, for example) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school, and more successful and effective in the profession or field, than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

#### Tell a Story

Be truthful and stick to the facts; yet, think of your personal statement in the terms of writing a story. You want to write something fresh, lively, and different, to put yourself ahead of the other applicants. A personal statement MUST be MEMORABLE. One of the worst things you can do with your personal statement is to bore the admissions committee, yet this is exactly what most applicants do. Review your life very carefully (get help from family or friends if necessary) for facets or experiences that reveal an unusual dimension related to your professional goals or those serving as evidence of your suitability for being a in this field.



# MORE ON WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

## WARNER UNIVERSITY

### **Find an Angle**

If you are like most people, your life story might well lack significant drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle is vital. Brainstorm for emphasizing your exceptional qualities, goals, and past performances.

### **Concentrate on Your Opening Paragraph**

Keep in mind, when composing your statement, the lead or OPENING PARAGRAPH IS generally the MOST IMPORTANT. Here you either GRAB the reader's attention or lose it. If you are telling a story you will use this first paragraph to introduce the elements most relevant to your story, and the ones that will hold greatest interest for the reader.

### **Tell Who You Are**

The committee needs to get a sense of who you are, what makes you tick, and how you are different from other applicants. They should be interested in you, eager to hear more, impressed by what you are saying to them is not what they have read a thousand times before.

Sometimes a personal statement can be perfectly well written in terms of language and grammar, but disastrous in lacking punch or impact; being totally off the mark concerning what it chooses to present about the applicant. Remember, what is most important about your personal statement is what you say and how you say it! Be selective about what you tell the admissions committee.

What you choose to say in your statement is, again, very much a reflection of you, because it shows the committee what your priorities are, what you consider to be important. The personal statement is often an indication, too, of your judgment, so be careful and give a great deal of thought to what you write. Think about yourself, your background, and your experiences and abilities to develop a strategy.

### **Other Things To Consider**

- Determine what you would tell an admission committee member if you had five minutes to answer the question "What is most important for us to know about you?" This exercise will force you to do the type of thinking necessary in the preparation of an effective personal statement.
- Do not make the mistake of trying to guess what the admissions committee is looking for, and do not just write what you think the committee wants to hear. Such ploys are highly obvious to admissions people and can be detrimental to your cause.
- Be selective. Don't introduce inappropriate material or get into so much detail, bringing your judgment to be called into question.
- Try to maintain a positive and upbeat tone. Overall, you want to project confidence and enthusiasm.
- Be specific when appropriate and use details.
- Adhere to stated word limits. Do not give them reason to toss your application packet.
- Be meticulous (type and proof read your essay carefully and have others read it too).
- If a school wants to know why you are applying to it rather than another school, do a bit of research if necessary to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities or programs. If the school setting would provide an important geographical or cultural change for you, this might be a factor to mention.
- Are you providing something more than a recitation of information available elsewhere in the application? Do not repeat information you have already included in other documents. Are you avoiding obvious clichés? For example, a medical school applicant who writes he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought.

(By t.1b7M Prof. Elizabeth Archuleta)

**Make an appointment to see a Career Counselor for individualized assistance with your personal statement!**