The Do's and Don'ts of Personal Statements

Do:

* Concentrate on one theme.

* Be unique.

* Start by grabbing attention.

* Read and follow directions; answer all questions.

* Consult outside sources.

* Explain inconsistencies in your history.

* Show. (Don't just tell.)

* Focus should be relevant to your field of study.

* Show your personality.

* Be straightforward and confident;
   show your strengths.

* Back things up; be **specific**.

* Have someone else look it over.

* Give yourself at least one week to work
   on your statement.

Don't:

* Have grammatical errors.

* Appear too scattered.

* Start with "I was Born."

* Make it a sob story.

* Make it a resume.

* Repeat things already mentioned
   in your application.

* Use the same statement for every school.

* Tell.

* Be general.

* Use clichés, lists, or chronological
   histories.

* Use humor unless confident of response.

* Focus too much on other people unless
   they were a big influence on your
   career path.

* Forget to proofread

Online Resources for Personal Statements

c **University of Washington, Undergraduate Admissions (for Transfer Students)**

Personal statement topics:
   http://www.washington.edu/students/uga/tr/apply/details/statement/topics.htm

Five writing tips for the personal statement:
   http://www.washington.edu/students/uga/tr/apply/details/statement/tips.htm

c **Online Writing Lab (OWL) from the Purdue University Writing Lab**

Includes brainstorming questions, general writing advice, samples of successful statements, and advice from admissions representatives.
   http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html

c **UC Berkley**

Includes advice for all stages of the personal statement writing process, including brainstorming, organizing, and revising.
   http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/index.htm

c **University of Illinois**

Lists prompts for brainstorming and personal statement dos and don'ts.
   http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/advice/writing_personal_statements.htm

c University Writing Center of Cal Poly Pomona

Includes "Preparing the Personal Statement: Personal Inventory Questions." The questions are designed to help students think of the important or "key" elements of the personal statement.
http://www.csupomona.edu/~uwc/non_protect/student/perstatinv.htm

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