



Drafting Scholarship and Application Statements

Part 2 of a workshop series from
The Composition Program
at Wayne State University



Wayne State
Rhetoric & Composition
Program

Workshop Overview:

This hour long workshop aims to introduce students to principles of drafting and idea generation for writing their own personal statements. Students will participate in a series of mini-lessons and activities designed to lead them through various drafting strategies. At the end of the workshop, students will have drafted the majority (or all) of their own personal statements.

Outcomes:

By the end of this workshop, students will:

1. Understand the concept of writing as a process
2. Practice drafting strategies to develop their own writing processes
3. Complete a first draft of a college application/scholarship personal statement

Review: Prewriting and Rhetorical Situation

→ *Let's get situated*

**What is the rhetorical situation of your
personal statement?**

(you may need to re-read the prompt)



Pull out your pre-writing (or work on a blank piece of paper):

- Read over what you wrote last time. What stands out to you? What are your favorite bits? Circle those. (if needed, jot a new list of your favorite characteristics...)
- Take a moment to brainstorm a list of specific examples you could write about for each of your favorite things.
- Underline the specific example you feel like is best suited to your purpose.

Drafting Your Introduction

→ *Hooking your audience without being cliché*

Let's take a look at some sample introduction paragraphs from personal statements, and we'll mark them up to see what moves each writer is making that we like and want to imitate.

Intro 1:

The turning point of my college football career came early in my third year. At the end of the second practice of the season, in ninety-five-degree heat, our head coach decided to condition the entire team. Sharp, excruciating pain shot down my legs as he summoned us repeatedly to the line to run wind sprints. I collapsed as I turned the corner on the final sprint. Muscle spasms spread throughout my body, and I briefly passed out. Severely dehydrated, I was rushed to the hospital and quickly given more than three liters of fluids intravenously. As I rested in a hospital recovery room, I realized my collapse on the field symbolized broader frustrations I felt playing college football. I was mentally and physically defeated. In South Dakota I was a dominant football player in high school, but at the Division I level my talent was less conspicuous. In my first three years, I was convinced that obsessively training my body to run faster and be stronger would earn me a starting position. The conditioning drill that afternoon revealed the futility of my approach. I had thrust my energies into becoming a player I could never be. As a result, I lost confidence in my identity.

Intro 2:

My home has been a place of healing for many broken hearts, both literally and figuratively. My younger sister had two open heart operations before the age of two. I was three years old, and I tried to be the best big sister in the world. I thought that if I loved her enough, her heart would heal itself. My brother was three and thirteen when he had his heart surgeries. This time, I was older and much more fearful, but my brother is the proud new owner of Vinny the Pulmonary Valve. Thus, two hearts have healed quite literally in my home. The figurative healing in my home sets it apart from many others. I have learned the importance of love and support in the face of trouble by watching my mother, the backbone of a local parent support group. Families need to know they are not alone, that I, too, was scared to see my brother gasp for breath after running up a flight of stairs. I have seen more aspects of the personal side of medicine than many people my age. I understand first hand the comforting effect a friendly smile and reassuring confidence from a doctor has on both patients and families. My family history is what sparked my interest in medicine, but my own experience has held my attention in recent years.

Intro 3:

A portrait of Julia Child leans precariously on my bedside table competing for space with sticky notes, pennies, and a plastic alarm clock. Julia has been my role model ever since I spent an hour at the Smithsonian American History Museum watching cooking show after cooking show. As she dropped eggs, burnt soufflés, and prepared a whole pig, she never took herself too seriously and with her goofy smile and accompanying laugh. And yet, she was as successful in her field as anyone could ever be. Her passion completely guided her career. She taught me that it does not matter what I choose to do, it only matters that I do it with my whole self; zealously and humorously. Unlike Julia, I do not aspire to be a chef. Brownies out of a box may just be the highlight of my baking career. Something I have been passionate about for my whole life, however, is teaching. The first traces of my excitement came from a summer camp that I founded when I was seven years old. Motivated by too many imperfect summer camp experiences, I established my ideal summer camp, one in which campers could choose their activities, from banana split tutorials to wacky hat-making. So that year it began, with seven five-year-old campers in my backyard. For six consecutive years, I ran my summer camp, each year tweaking and improving from the years before.

Take about 5-10 minutes to draft your introduction paragraph. What is a clear, specific image you can show or story you can tell to set the tone for your essay?

Exploding the Moment: adding more details

→ *Being more specific than you think you need to be is key!*

Take a minute to jot down a sentence that might be the start of a body paragraph here:

Now, explode that moment:

Editing Down:

Once you have exploded a moment, you probably can then go in and choose the best, most relevant details to include, and CUT THE REST.

Practice:

Take the example paragraph above and practice making it much more focused. Use specific details and examples. Edit out vague phrasing and sentences that don't belong. Use the lines below to re-write your more focused paragraph:

[illegible]

Then, *keep going...*

Works Cited

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