

Writing a Personal Statement

Presenting Yourself



Why is it Important to Write a Strong Personal Statement?

- It's a chance to
 - Tell your story
 - Demonstrate your ability to write
 - Affirm your desire to attend that program of study
 - Improve your chance of getting accepted!



Rule One: Know Thy Audience

- Read the personal statement guidelines.
 - What do they want to know about you?
 - What personal qualities do they value?
 - What type of student are they looking for?



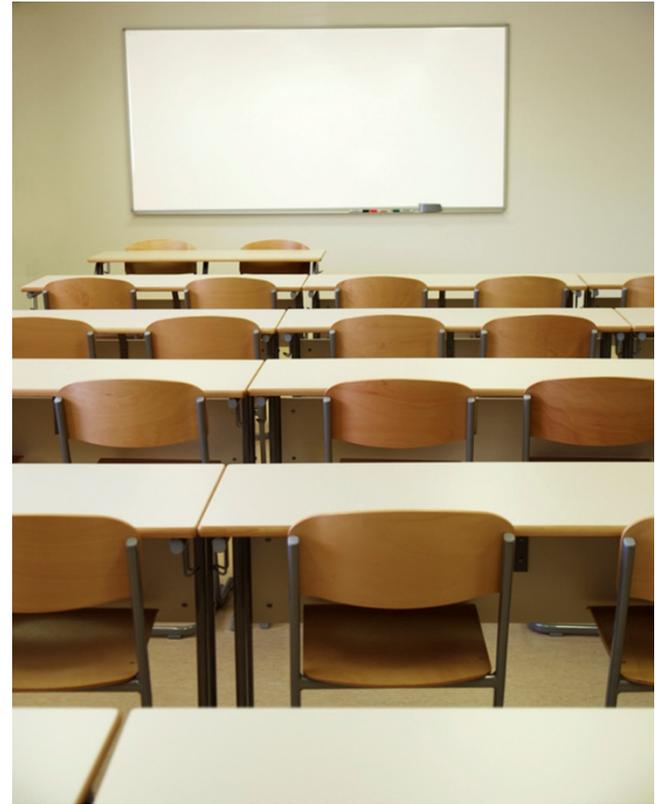
Unspoken Questions

- Have you done your research?
- Can you follow directions?
- Do you really want this opportunity?



University Guidelines

- Each prompt is different
- May be major-specific or related to institutional values
- Look for opportunities to talk about:
 - Challenges/hardships
 - Experiences outside of school
 - Other unique things about you



Format

- There may be two different formation options:
 - Online submission options
 - Hard copy submission options
- When you submit online, some formatting may be lost. This will not count against you.

Make it Personal and Memorable

- Admissions staff read **MANY** essays
- Make yours one they will remember with ***your*** story, and great writing



Getting Started

- Read the guidelines and questions carefully
- Generate a response
 - Brainstorm
 - Idea Mapping (Clustering)
- Create an outline organizing this information

Use a “Theme” to Organize Your Ideas

- Theme = A Unifying Idea
- Examples:
 - Overcoming challenges
 - Helping others
 - Building community
- Creates coherence and unity



Theme example: Show, Don't Tell

Theme:

Overcoming challenges

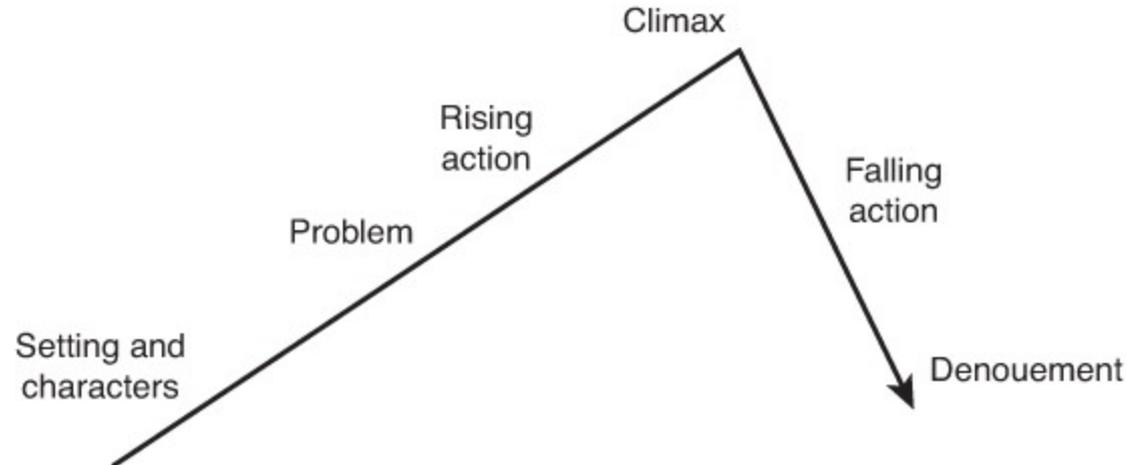
Example:

As the first person in my family to attend college, I had to convince my family that higher education was a worthwhile pursuit. Although my brothers made fun of me for attending community college, I never wavered in my dedication to succeed.

Be specific – give examples!

Patterns of Organization

- Narrative
 - Tells a story that builds to an important change
 - Often involves confronting and overcoming challenges
 - Can weave together your academic, career, and personal goals
 - Tells the story of who you are and how you're poised to be successful



Things to Avoid

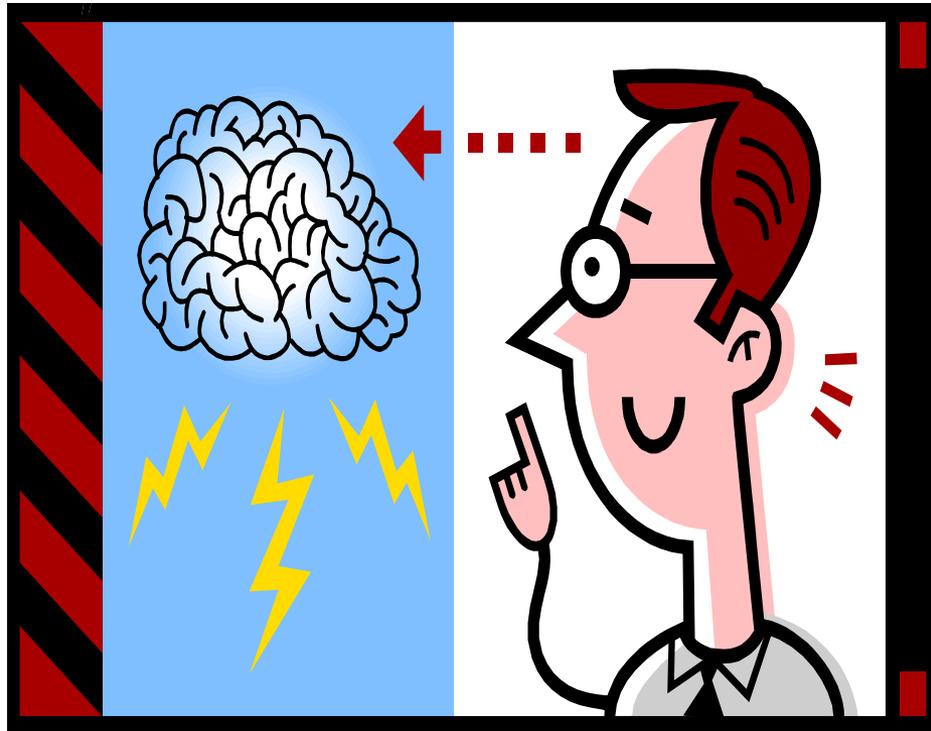
- Clichés and stereotypes
- Fawning over the school
- Talking about money as a motivator
- Complaining about your life
- Spelling the school name wrong
- Using an informal tone
- Poor grammar and spelling



Be Creative, Be an Individual

- Set yourself apart
- Show off your individuality
- Surprise yourself with the story of you





Brainstorming for Your Personal Theme

Individualizing Your Story

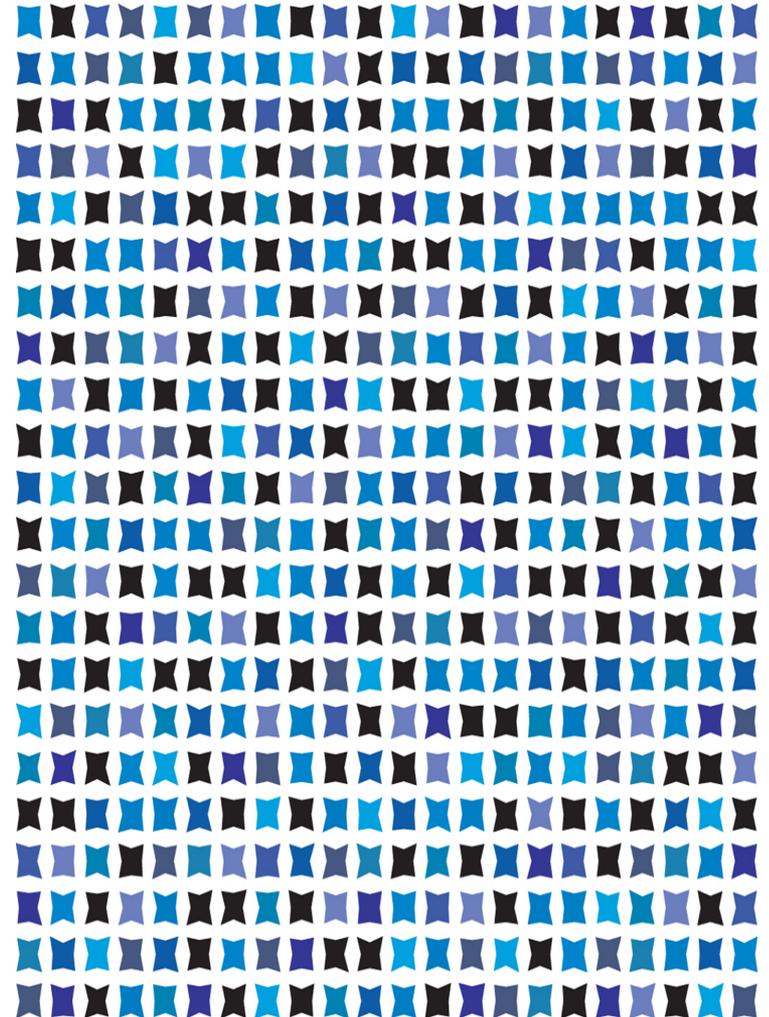
Step One: Defining Events

- At the top of a piece of paper, write : Defining Events in My Life that Led Me to This Point
- Take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of these defining events
- Don't edit yourself!
- Write down any event, no matter how trivial



Step Two: Identify a Pattern

- Read over your list.
- Is there a pattern or theme to your story?
 - Is there one type of event or personality trait that pops up again and again?
 - What kind of path led you here? Was it a straight shot or a treacherous climb?
 - Have certain motivators influenced your decisions throughout your life?
- Write down your theme on the paper.

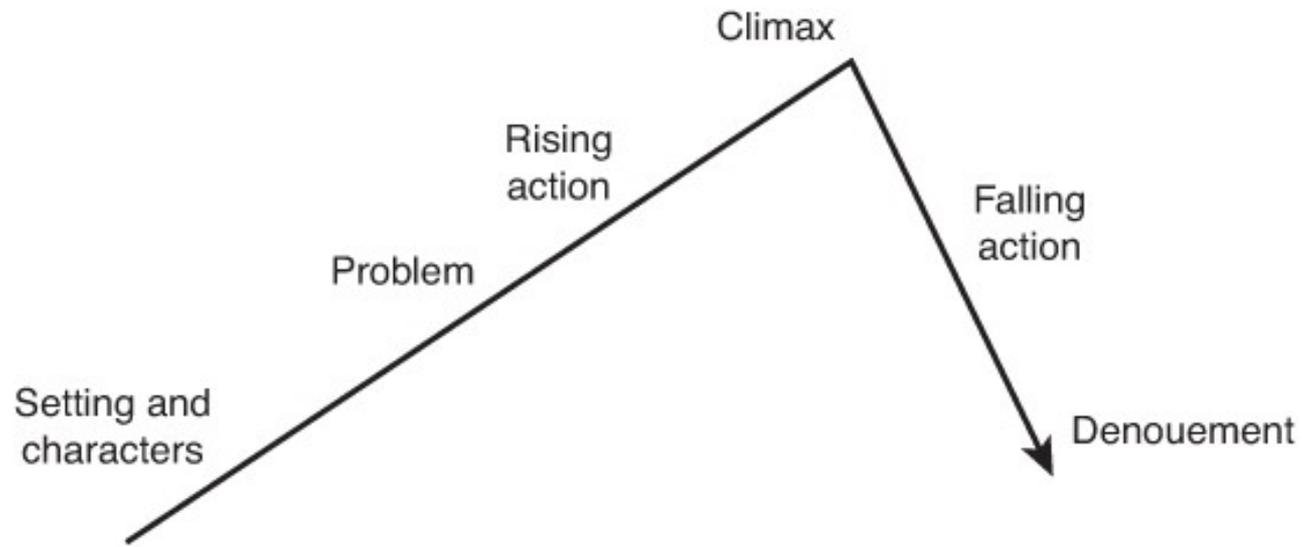


Step Three: Brainstorm, Round Two

- On a separate piece of paper, brainstorm responses to these topics. Ask yourself how they fit into your overall theme.
 - Academic history
 - Personal history
 - Your major and career goals
 - Cultural understanding
 - Educational challenges and hardships
 - Community or volunteer service
 - Experiential learning

Step Four: Outline

- Now write a working outline.
- See if you can fit your story to a narrative structure



Step Five: Write and Revise

- Write the rough draft of your essay
- Come visit the Page One Writing Center to get help with revisions
- You can also review this PowerPoint online at: northseattle.edu/tutoring/slc-workshops.

