**Writing a Personal Statement: Suggestions and Recommendations**

**What To Do…**

* Essays give you a chance to express yourself in ways that are not possible in other application materials.
  + Express your enthusiasm for psychology and chosen area of psychology
  + Explain why you are uniquely suitable for admission to ***their program***
  + Explain why you are particularly excited/interested in ***their program***
* Use your essay to highlight your strengths and uniqueness. Summarize significant experiences or events that shaped you as a person and influenced your career goals and ambitions.
* For doctoral or research-focused programs, identify faculty members who share your research interest in a topic and describe your desire to work with them. Be specific, but also keep your options open so they won’t question your interest in working with other professors if the ones you listed aren’t taking new students that year.
* Demonstrate that you have done the research when emphasizing your match with the program.
* Describe yourself honestly and realistically.
* Allow yourself ample time to write, revise, edit, and proofread.
  + Pay attention to grammar and spelling
  + Ask others for feedback and suggestions
* Follow instructions to the letter (word or page limitations, formatting, answering every question). Typical length is between 500 and 1000 words.

**What NOT To Do…**

* Don’t repeat data that are already in your application, such as standardized test scores or GPA.
* Don’t talk about controversial topics—religion, politics, etc.
* Do not literally write your autobiography! Your essay should focus on your journey as an emerging scholar. Describe how you have actively confirmed your career interests and how earning a graduate degree will help you achieve these goals.
* Don't whine or complain about the “system” or the circumstances in your life. If you choose to explain some blemishes in your application, be brief and positive.
* Don't talk about money or prestige as a motivator for pursuing a graduate degree.
* Do not remind the school of its rankings or tell them how good they are. Instead, discuss the specific features of their training program that appeal to you.
* Use a professional tone in your writing, but avoid dressing up your essay with big words.
* Do not use boring clichéd intros or conclusions. Do not use unconventional and gimmicky formats and packages.
* Do not submit supplemental materials unless they are requested in the application.