

1. Know your audience.

Start by creating a list of the qualities/attributes you think they, the admissions committee, will be looking for in an applicant. For each attribute write down as many examples from your own experiences that demonstrate you possess that attribute.

2. Relay your professional and personal goals.

Most opening paragraphs are short and present a summary of your background, academic and career interests, and future goals that justify your application to an advanced degree program. Subsequent paragraphs describe in more detail your actual background and experiences that led to or reinforced these goals. A closing paragraph (or statement) that describes how this particular program will help bridge your undergraduate years with your success in a profession career.

3. Talk from your heart.

One of the most important attributes of a candidate is their passion for the field. No program wants to accept applicants simply because they are capable of completing the program. They want individuals who are passionate about the field, that think about problems in the field, that have been driven to gain more and more experience in the field, that have overcome obstacles or made sacrifices in order to pursue their dream and, of course, have the intellectual ability to complete the degree program.

4. Be proud and positive.

You should be proud of your accomplishments and speak positively about your experiences. Do not belittle yourself or others. Do you like people who talk negatively about others, constantly complain or make excuses? Avoid negativity and show maturity! Talk positively about whom you are and the type of professional you want to become.

5. The DON'Ts.

- Don't speak in generalities. Give specific examples!
- Don't ramble on. Provide meaningful information and make every word count!
- Don't use bad grammar or make typos. Proofread and edit!
- Don't make excuses or dwell on poor qualities. Explain yourself, if necessary, and move on!
- Don't list qualities. You need to demonstrate qualities!
- Don't write a flamboyant literary masterpiece to make you noticed or define yourself as special or unique. Let the details of your experiences make you unique! Don't restate scores and grades that are listed elsewhere in your application. Being proud doesn't include bragging!
- Don't be 'sterile' in describing your experiences. Show enthusiasm and passion by speaking from your heart. Thoughts and feelings make you unique too!

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