

Writing the Personal Statement for Grad School



WRITING &
MULTILITERACY
CENTER

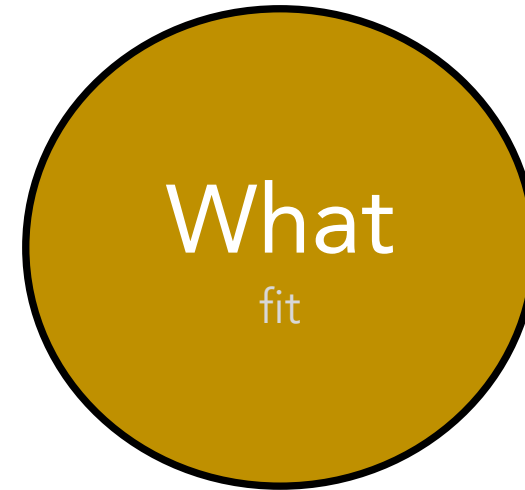
C H A N N E L
I S L A N D S

What is a personal statement?

What is the Graduate Admission
Committee looking for in their
ideal candidate?

What kinds of **questions** do you
think they are asking?

Personal Statement answers...



Personal Statements answers Why, How, What through organized narratives that provide “evidence” to your story.



**Temporal
Narrative:**

Past, Present, Future



**Reasoning
Narrative:**

Why, How, What



INTRODUCTION: PAST

Establish motivation based on the past.

You might provide a **short anecdote** (a few sentences) that relates how a crucial past experience led to decision to apply to a graduate program.

Thesis should include a reference to the name of the program and university and a clear statement of interest.



TEMPORAL NARRATIVE



BODY: PAST/PRESENT

Past and present experiences and accomplishments (academic and/or extra-curricular) can be presented to offer qualifications/readiness for the program.

Show (or illustrate)—don't just tell

Be concrete

Tie the stories back

Be concise



TEMPORAL NARRATIVE



CONCLUSION: FUTURE

Establish your future: What do you imagine you'd do in the program? Who would you work with? What do you hope to gain from the degree and how will it help you professionally?

Recap motives for applying
Refer back to your interest in the graduate program

Dream. Don't worry if you are "unsure" what you might do exactly. No one will hold you up to what you write. It's your opportunity to dream big and explain why this program is integral to your success.



TEMPORAL NARRATIVE



← INTRODUCTION: Why

Establishing why you are applying. You might establish this motive through a personal anecdote, timely news, and other factors that might help explain your interest in pursuing a degree right now.

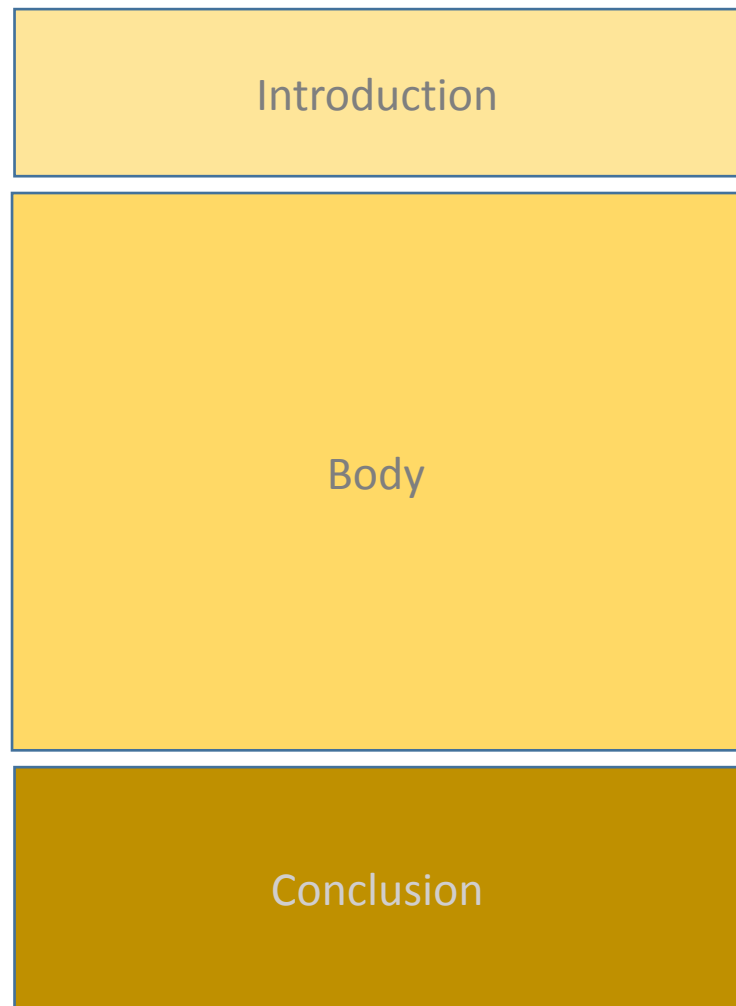
Be concise and concrete with your opener. Get to your point quickly and connect to your thesis.

Show rather than tell. Think of ways you can “show” your interest in the area of study (for graduate school).

Thesis should include a reference to the name of the program and university and a strong statement of interest.



REASONING NARRATIVE



BODY: HOW

How are you prepared and qualified?

Key experiences (academic) can be presented to offer qualifications/readiness for the program.

Key experiences (extra-curricular) can be presented to offer qualifications/readiness for the program.

Show (or illustrate)—don't just tell

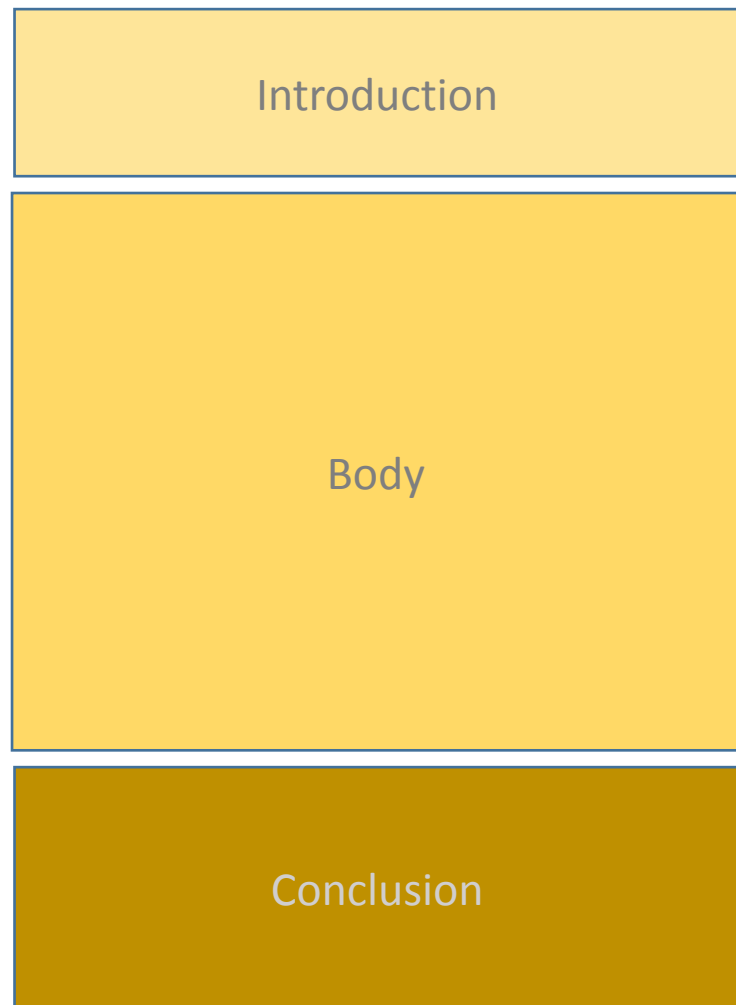
Be concrete

Tie the stories back

Be concise



REASONING NARRATIVE



CONCLUSION: WHAT

What will you do in the program and beyond?

What do you imagine you'd do in the program? Who would you work with? What do you hope to gain from the degree and how will it help you professionally? (same as temporal narrative)

Recap motives for applying

Refer back to your interest in the graduate program

Dream. Don't worry if you are "unsure" what you might do exactly. No one will hold you up to what you write. It's your opportunity to dream big and explain why this program is integral to your success.



REASONING NARRATIVE



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



What's good?

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



What's good?

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Exam

focus on skill over background in IT

RST DRAFT

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through **problem solving**. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use **my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business**. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



What's good?

they mention the program

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Exam

focus on skill over background in IT

RST DRAFT

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through **problem solving**. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



What's good?

they mention the program

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Exam

focus on skill over background in IT

RST DRAFT

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through **problem solving**. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.

on the right track as far as what to cover



What could be better?

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

vague - needs
specific examples

**What could be
better?**

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

vague - needs
specific examples

**What could be
better?**

unnecessary
duplication of
name/program

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - **FIRST DRAFT**

vague - needs
specific examples

**What could be
better?**

unnecessary
duplication of
name/program

Throughout my life I have seen myself as a person who provides assistance for others through problem solving. In my professional and personal experiences I have been involved in situations where individuals in need of my support to resolve a problem whenever they were stuck. My motive for applying to the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University is to use my skills of logic, adaptability, and quick thinking to assist companies in their technical needs in order to keep a flowing environment within their business. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management for a Masters in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University. Throughout my personal statement I have described my reasons behind obtaining a master's degree at Cal Lutheran, experience in leadership, future career goals/ pathway to my future career, and how I will contribute to the graduate program of Information Technology.

show, don't tell



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the

Identify the following (in the [handout](#)):

- 1. Why is this person applying?**
- 2. How do they connect their experience to this program?**
- 3. Where do they “show rather than tell?”**

provide me with the ability to delivery learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**Why are they
applying?**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

Why are they applying?

opens with a personal connection and story

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**How do they
connect their
experience to
this program?**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**How do they
connect their
experience to
this program?**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

Acknowledgement
of Psychology
background

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**How do they
connect their
experience to
this program?**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

Acknowledgement
of Psychology
background

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**Where do they
“show” rather
than “tell?”**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



**Where do they
“show” rather
than “tell?”**

Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”



Reasoning Narrative: Introductory Paragraph Example - FINAL DRAFT

**Where do they
“show” rather
than “tell?”**

“Throughout my life I have witnessed a great deal of hard work from someone very close to me, my mother. She has worked her way through her company and became an IT manager. After having seen her work in the server room and fix the company's network, I was introduced to the world of technology. Even though, my background is in psychology, I saw my mother working in information technology throughout the years and it has motivated me to venture towards a master's degree in Information Technology. Information technology is a constantly changing field that will provide me with the ability to actively learn about technology overtime. Four years of psychology will give me leverage in the field of information technology in the way that it has helped me with understanding people and my development of interpersonal, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. I am excited to be a candidate for the Graduate School of Management in the Master's Program in Information Technology at Cal Lutheran University.”

Your Turn!

Dr. Sohui Lee
(sohui.lee@csuci.edu)

Dr. Abigail Micheline
(abigail.micheline@csuci.edu)