Tips for Writing a Personal Statement: Telling Your Story

As part of the application process for the online UW Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood & Family Studies program, you'll need to submit two pieces of writing: a personal statement, which is part of your UW application, and an ECFS application essay that acts as your application to the major. Here we’ll dive into the personal statement. For details on the ECFS application essay, please check out the Degree Program Application page or contact one of our advisers.

The personal statement is your chance to talk about your educational, professional and personal background and why you want to attend the ECFS online bachelor's program. It’s your chance to give context for your academic achievements and educational choices.

To help you make the most of this opportunity, we’ve put together some tips to help you write your best personal statement.

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

1. Your Academic Experience

In your personal statement, you'll be asked to write about different aspects of your academic experience. You'll want to show the admissions committee why you would be a good fit academically for the ECFS program. If you've had bumps along the way in your education, don’t let that discourage you. Take this chance to explain the circumstances. Your personal statement should cover the following elements:

• **Academic History:** Tell us about your college career to date, describing your performance, educational path and choices. Explain any situations that may have had a significant positive or negative impact on your academic progress or curricular choices. If you transferred multiple times, had a significant break in your education or changed career paths, be sure to explain.

• **Education and Career Goals:** Tell us about why you chose to apply to the Early Childhood & Family Studies program. Describe your career aspirations and share how attending the UW will help you reach your academic, career and/or personal goals.

• **Preparedness for the Program:** Describe how you’re prepared to enter the program. If you're not fully prepared yet, discuss how you plan to prepare. For example, you might share what classes you intend to take before the program begins.

If you have serious concerns about your academic eligibility or GPA, contact one of our program advisers by email or by phone at 206-685-8936 or 888-469-6499. Our advisers can help you create an academic plan to strengthen your position to apply later.

2. Your Personal Experience

Grades and test scores tell only a fraction of your story. Your background and work, family, volunteer and other experiences are also a part of your education and what you bring to the UW student body. In your personal statement, you’ll be asked to write about
your personal experience. This is your chance to talk about the unique path you’ve taken and how your life lessons help make you a good candidate for the program.

Your personal statement should cover the following elements:

- **Cultural Understanding**: Thoughtfully describe how culture has affected your life and what you’ve learned about yourself and society as a result. How has your own cultural history enriched or challenged you? Keep in mind that culture can be defined broadly. Cultural understanding is often drawn from the ethnic background, customs, values and ideas of a person’s immediate family, community and/or the social environment they live in.

- **Educational Challenges and Personal Hardships**: Describe any personal or imposed challenges or hardships you have overcome in pursuing your education. Examples include: serious illness, a disability, first generation in your family to attend college, significant financial hardship, and responsibilities associated with balancing work, family and school.

- **Community, Military and Volunteer Service**: Describe any community, military or volunteer service you’ve had, including leadership roles, awards and increased levels of responsibility.

- **Experiential Learning**: Describe any involvement you’ve had in research, artistic, family, work or volunteer opportunities that have contributed to your academic, career or personal goals.

- **Additional Comments**: Do you have a compelling academic or personal need to attend the ECFS bachelor’s program? Is there anything else you would like us to know? You can include additional comments in your personal statement.

**HOW TO WRITE IT**

Write your personal statement in essay format, using full sentences and paragraph breaks to denote changes in topic. You might be familiar with essays that are written with a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs and a closing. There’s no need to create that type of essay for your personal statement. Just write in complete sentences and in a way that makes it clear that you’re addressing the topics and questions.

Follow the order of the topics and questions as they are provided, and use paragraph breaks to designate when you change topics. Because of the high volume of applications reviewers must read, it’s to your advantage to make it clear and easy for them to see that you’ve addressed all the topics and questions. Use first-person point of view (“I”).

The suggested length is 750–1,000 words. If you’re using 12-point font size and double spacing, that’s three to four pages. Content as well as form, spelling, grammar and punctuation will be considered, so be sure to give yourself plenty of time for brainstorming, writing drafts, revising and fixing typos and errors.
For more tips, check out what writing coach Debby Bacharach has to say or watch our video on the subject. These tips were created for students writing similar documents for entering UW graduate programs, but the advice is excellent and applicable to the ECFS online bachelor’s program as well.

HOW TO FORMAT IT

Write your statement first in a word processing program (such as Word) or a text editor, and then copy and paste it into the text box provided during the online application process. You’ll notice your line breaks will remain, but some formatting may be lost, such as bold, italics and underlining. Formatting changes will not affect the evaluation of your application.