

(A Very Poor) Personal Statement

Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to be a clinical psychologist. This is because when I was 7, my parents got divorced. It was a really terrible divorce, and I ended up having to take care of my little sister. I had to meet with a clinical psychologist, and she helped me alot so I also want to help people like he did.

I decided that I wanted to apply to the University of Minnesota, Mankato to get my masters degree in clinical psychology. I chose this school because I am already living in Minnesota, so I would prefer to stay in the area. I also have heard that Mankato is a fun place to live with a good music scene and lots of places to go hiking, which I like to do.

I am a hard worker, and my GPA of 3.25 reflects this. I know my freshman year does not look too great; at first, I didn't study all that much and was too busy having fun with my friends. But by sophomore year I got more serious, and started to take college more seriously.

While at school, I took classes in developmental psychology, personality psychology and abnormal psychology to prepare for graduate school, and I got As in each of these classes. I also did a class project in Psy4820 on how advertisements affect persuasion. Also, I have done a study with Dr. Jones on student attitudes.

Working with Dr. Jones has been a very meaningful experience for me.

I'm not too sure what I want to study in graduate school. I really think that research on PTSD is interesting, but I also think I'd like to work with children. I also think that studying how religion affects therapy could be really interesting. I'm not sure if there's much research going on at Minnesota State University on those topics,

Comment [1]: Most people are not born knowing what they want to do. The selection committee is interested in hearing about how you really found out about the field, and why you find it interesting.

Comment [2]: Be careful about sharing intimate details about yourself. It suggests that you do not set good personal boundaries, which is a red flag for many graduate programs.

Comment [3]: Proofread carefully!

Comment [4]: Be very careful to get the name of the institution and the program right.

Comment [5]: You should be choosing schools that fit your goals, not schools that are simply convenient for you.

Comment [6]: Graduate programs typically don't care whether you actually want to live where they are situated. Instead, they want to know that you are a good fit for the program.

Comment [7]: Show, don't tell. What evidence can you point to that you are a "hard worker"?

Comment [8]: This is not a competitive GPA at most graduate schools. Make sure you have checked their requirements and that you meet their minimums.

Comment [9]: If you have a problem in your application such as a low GPA or GRE score, let your letter writers know about it. Do not address it in your letter.

Comment [10]: They can get this information from your transcript—no need to provide it here.

Comment [11]: Use class titles instead of numbers—nobody knows what this means.

Comment [12]: This lacks detail. How was it meaningful? What did you do? What did you learn from the experience?

Comment [13]: It's OK not to be certain about exactly what you want to study, but do try to narrow it down to just a couple of topics, and make sure any topics you mention are being studied by someone at that university.

Comment [14]: You really should know... do your research!

so I can be flexible. I am really just interested in making a good living, and I think that therapy is a good way to do this (especially if we have a Republican in the White House who keeps starting wars—haha!)

After graduation, I would really like to have my own practice. I would like to have this practice in a small town, preferably where I grew up. In sum, I am very excited about the opportunities at Mankato. I look forward to joining the department next fall.

Comment [15]: Try not to mention money; you should be going to graduate school because you love the topic, not to make money.

Comment [16]: Be very careful about mentioning topics such as politics or religion in your statement, unless the program you are applying to is focused on these topics. And don't use humor, it is too risky.

Comment [17]: Be careful to insure that any of your future goals are realistic, and are in line with what the program will train you for. The likelihood that you could own a private practice in a town of your choice is pretty low.

Comment [18]: Use the school's proper name.

Comment [19]: Use a tone that is confident, but not cocky.

(A Better) Personal Statement

My interest in psychology dates back to childhood. I had some opportunities to interact with local counseling psychologists, and I found the work that they did fascinating. However, it wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I seriously started considering clinical psychology as a potential career. I was completely transfixed by my Abnormal Psychology course. After the course ended, I approached my instructor, Dr. Jones, and he was gracious enough to let me join his research team to learn more about the field.

Comment [20]: This is an honest, meaningful story about how this person has developed a passion for this particular field.

Comment [21]: This is a great illustration of how this student takes initiative, and is willing to take the extra step to learn and develop.

The time I've spent working with Dr. Jones has solidified my drive to ultimately earn my Ph.D. in clinical psychology. I have worked on a total of 4 studies with Dr. Jones, and I've gotten a great deal of experience running participants, designing research materials, conducting literature reviews, and conducting some analyses using SPSS. I also had the opportunity to present my research paper, "The effect of meditation on information retention" at the Midwestern Psychological Conference and at the Midwestern Undergraduate Research Conference in spring of 2014.

Comment [22]: This is a nice way to provide information about career goals, while also showing that these experiences have helped to build this student's expertise on the topic.

Comment [23]: This gives the selection committee a lot more information about what this student can do. Having a student who can do all this (and who has some statistical software experience) is definitely a plus.

Comment [24]: Highlighting presentations, publications, and similar things in this letter can also catch the selection committee's attention.

I am excited to continue my development as a researcher at Minnesota State University. I believe the program's focus on science and practice is admirable, and I feel that the courses will provide a good base for me to continue on to earn my Ph.D. In particular, I am interested in Dr. Buchanan's research on aging, as I believe that is an underserved population that I would love to work with in the future.

Comment [25]: Do your research, and be honest about why a certain program is appealing to you. You should tailor this letter to each place you are applying.

Comment [26]: If there is a particular faculty member you are interested in working with, it is a good idea to mention it in your letter.

I believe that I am prepared for the rigors of graduate study. A number of my undergraduate classes have been challenging. In particular, I found my

Neuroscience class to be particularly difficult; however, I worked hard and visited the instructor when I had questions, and I am proud to say that I earned an A in the course. I actually enjoyed the class so much I also took a Behavioral Genetics course as well. It was a good lesson for me for how rewarding a challenge can be.

Comment [27]: This provides some evidence that the student is motivated, and knows what to do when s/he is faced with a difficult task.

I am excited about the possibility of joining the clinical program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, as the next step in my career. I look forward to hearing more about the program. Thank you for taking the time to review my materials.

Comment [28]: Here, the writer is being confident, but not cocky or entitled.

Comment [29]: Always be gracious to the committee. It never hurts to thank them for their time.