

FELLOWSHIPS PERSONAL STATEMENTS: SELF-EDITING CHECKLIST

- ◇ Identify how your essay talks about the fellowship as a springboard into future goals. Make sure this is clear to the reader.
- ◇ Then, show how you will be a value-add to this program. Your specific skills are critical to the program. Make those known. Show the narrative.
- ◇ Underline each introduction sentence. Read through all of them in one cohesive narrative. Can your thesis/main argument shine through by just doing that?
- ◇ Remove all “throat clearing” sentences and replace them with strong, clear, precise prose.
- ◇ “And then I did this, and then I did this, and then I did this.” Don’t make it a talking resume. Vary the language. Make the story interesting.
- ◇ Figure out which words you use as crutches. Do you say “unique” five times? What about “interdisciplinary” or “intersection of X and Y”? Comb through your sentences to find highly used words and change things up.
- ◇ “I believe.” “I think.” “I feel that.” “I hope.” Remove. We know you do, as you are the writer of this statement. Write with confidence and conviction.
- ◇ Show, don’t tell.
- ◇ Read your personal statement slowly out loud. Fix places where you stall.
- ◇ Check for spelling and grammar.
- ◇ Put the draft away for a week. Don't look at it, don't think about it.
- ◇ Read your draft after a week away. Remove or change the bits that feel not quite right now that you’ve had some time away from your writing.
- ◇ Ask valued mentors, faculty, friends, and/or family to now take another look at your draft. Identify a place that you feel doesn't quite “work still” and get specific feedback on that part of your statement.
- ◇ Rinse and repeat.