

Statement of Purpose

YOUR FULL NAME (Applicant, [Programme] - [Term Year])

Read the prompt first, and answer the one you were given. Some schools ask for a statement of purpose, some for objectives, some for a set of specific questions. The paragraph order below works for a single continuous statement. If you were given questions, answer them in their order and keep the register.

1. Opening. Two sentences. No story yet.

State the areas you work in, then the objective that work serves. This is the thesis of the whole document, and every paragraph after it is evidence. Write it last. Do not open with a quote, a childhood memory, or the word passion.

[My primary research interests lie in the areas of **[area one]** and **[area two]** as applied to **[your field]**. My career objective is to **[the thing you want to make possible]**, enabling **[the concrete outcome]**.]

2. Origin. Where the interest actually began.

One specific event, told plainly. A number, a place, a person who asked you something. The paragraph must end by connecting to the field you are applying in, not to a feeling. If it did not happen, leave it out; a committee reads hundreds of these and invented origins are visible.

[My first research problem came to me at **[age or moment]**. **[The specific event, in one or two sentences, with a real detail in it]**. I did not have an answer, so I built **[the thing you made]**, a **[what it was]**. **[What you personally did on it]**, and **[what came of it]**. **[One sentence on what that taught you about the field]**.]

3. The failure. The most important paragraph in the document.

Take the project that went wrong and narrate it properly: what you built, what broke, why it broke, and what the failure told you about the problem. Do not defend the design. The point is not that you recovered, it is that the failure set your research direction. Most applicants omit this and all of them sound the same as a result.

[What you were responsible for, and on what]. **[The challenge, stated technically]**. **[What you built: the specific components, sensors, algorithms]**. **[What happened when it was tested for real]**. **[Why it happened, in one sentence, in terms of the underlying assumption that was wrong]**. **[The outcome, including a placing or number if there is one]**. **[What the episode changed about how you think]**.]

4. First research position. What you could not do, and how you closed it.

Say what you built and on what hardware, and name the hardware. Most applicants have only ever run simulations, so a real platform is evidence a reader recognises without being told. Then say what you were bad at when you arrived. Naming a real gap and how you closed it is worth more than another list of accomplishments, because it shows the committee you can tell the difference. Name the supervisor and the institution.

[In **[Month Year]** I joined **[Supervisor]**'s group at **[institution]**. I built **[the system]** and validated it on **[the platform]**, which became **[thesis, paper, deliverable]**. I arrived able to **[what you were already good at]** but weak in **[the honest gap]**. **[What the work actually consisted of, especially the unglamorous parts]**. I closed that gap on **[the second project]**, where I did **[your specific contribution]**. **[Where it went: submitted, published, in preparation]**.]

5. Later positions. How each one followed from the last.

Show the chain. Each position should exist because the previous one raised a question. That sequence cannot be reverse-engineered, which is exactly why it is convincing. Say how you found the group; if you wrote to them yourself, say so once, plainly.

[[What you encountered that sent you looking], and I wrote to [Supervisor] at [institution], who took me on in [Month Year]. I [what you built there, technically]. [The question that work raised] sent me to [the next group], where I [what you did]. [One sentence on what these positions taught you about doing research rather than executing tasks].]

6. Fit. One group. Not three.

Pick the single group whose research programme contains your whole profile, not one that matches one project. Read a paper of theirs end to end and engage with something specific in it: an assumption they state, a limitation they admit. Then say what you would bring. If you cannot name what is specific about this group, you are not ready to write this paragraph.

[A lot of the work in [the group] interested me, particularly [what they work on, in their terms not yours]. One paper in particular, [title], drew me in enough that [what you did with it: read the code, reproduced it, wrote to the author]. [The specific thing you found in it]. [What that opens up, and what you would contribute]. I want to join the group for [the honest reason].]

7. Narrowing. What you want to work on, specifically.

Name the problem in technical language, not as a field. Naming a field is not naming a problem. A committee should be able to picture the thing you would actually sit down and work on, and the difference is usually one level of specificity below where most applicants stop. Two or three directions at most. This paragraph is where a committee decides whether you know what you are talking about.

[Though I am open to a range of problems within [field], my own work has narrowed me to [the specific problem class]. [Which of your projects were of that kind, and why]. [The specific thing you would like to work on during graduate study, stated technically]. [A second direction, and why it follows from the first].]

8. Faculty. One thesis advisor, two or three alignments.

One name gets a real reason. The others get one clause each and no argument. Trying to please every professor makes you fit nowhere. Check that everyone you name is still active, still at that institution, and still working on what you claim.

[I would want my thesis under [Professor], [the specific reason, tied to how they work with students or what they work on]. [Professor]'s work on [topic] is of particular interest to me. I am also drawn to [Professor]'s work on [topic].]

9. Closer. Return to the opening, once.

No summary, no restating your qualifications, no thanking the committee. One image or commitment that connects back to where the statement began. Short. If the last line could appear in anyone else's statement, rewrite it.

[[The concrete personal detail, if you have a true one]. [What you have done since, in one clause]. [What graduate study is for, in your own terms].]

Before you send it

Delete every red line, including this one. Read it aloud; anything you would not say out loud comes out. Cut every sentence that could appear in someone else's statement. Do not sell an affiliation, just state it and let the reader react. Avoid sentences whose force comes from their shape rather than from a fact. Check the word limit, and check whether footnotes and headers count towards it. Have one person who knows the field read it, and one who does not.