Ideas On What To Include In Your Graduate Application Essay

Questions to ask yourself as you’re writing your essay:

**Academic Interests:** What would you like to study? Describe your academic interests. What would you be interested in learning in graduate school?

**Academic Objectives:** Why do you plan to attend graduate school? Explain how graduate school will contribute to your career goals. What do you plan to do with your degree?

**Academic Achievements:** Discuss your academic background and achievements. What strengths and weaknesses you have as a student?

**Career Plans:** What are your long-term career goals? Where do you see yourself, career wise, 5 and 10 years from now?

**Research Experiences:** Discuss your research experiences. What areas would you like to research?

**Clinical and Field Experience:** Discuss your clinical and other applied experiences. How have these experiences shaped your career goals?

**Personal Experience:** Write an autobiographical essay. Is there anything in your background that you think would be relevant to your application for admission to graduate school? Describe your life up to now: family, friends, home, school, work, and particularly those experiences most relevant to your interests in psychology. What is your approach to life?

**Dos and Don’ts in Graduate-School Essays**

- Don’t quote Dr. Seuss in your essay or any other children’s characters. I love Dr. Seuss but I’ve read at least a hundred essays with Dr. Seuss quotes—they’re not new.
- Don’t write a general essay. You need to write for the program and school. They all have a different flavor and a bland, generic essay is very obvious to faculty.
- Make a connection with a couple faculty members in the program of interest. Show the ways that you connect to their work and what you hope to learn from them.
- Have an idea in mind in terms of what you are interested in conducting research on but don’t be too rigid. Remember you are going to graduate school to learn and open your mind.
- Don’t say you are interested in everything that every faculty member in the program does. That’s impossible and will make you look like you’re all over the place.
- Don’t send in an essay with another school’s name in it. Proof read. Please proof read.
- Don’t talk about how your test scores don’t represent the extent of your abilities. Instead, if your test scores aren’t as high as you wish they were, make the rest of your application as stellar as possible. Don’t apologize—shine!
- Do discuss your interests and your reasons for having those interests. Be concrete and avoid countless abstract thoughts.
- Don’t gush about faculty members with whom you want to work. State your reasons and be professional. Try to avoid the use of “love.” I’m serious.
- Don’t use jargon and big words, especially when you don’t know how to properly use them. Keep your essay simple and straightforward and make your point.
- Remember that a lot of people are applying to graduate school so look for positive ways to make you stand above the crowd.

*Note: Your essay should not look like a response sheet to the above questions. These are only ideas/questions to keep in mind as you begin writing. Good Luck!*