

WRITING FOR GRAD & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

10/01/2025

Becky Anderson (she/her),
Centre for Career Development



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Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land cared for, stewarded by, and stolen from Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is coordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.



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TIME

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

WHERE

SLC - Student
Life Centre



THURSDAY
**OCT
09**



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Who am I?

- Becky (she/her)
- Career Advisor at CCD & part-time PhD Candidate in Dept. of English
- makes windchimes from thrifted materials; passionate about habitat restoration and swimming with my dog; currently learning to handstand



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What's on the agenda for today?

key terms
and purpose

how writing
is evaluated

things to
write about

navigating
disclosure

formatting
conventions



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What do you have questions about?



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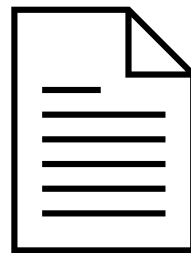
Key terms you might see



Personal statement



Statement or letter
of intent



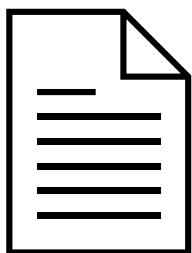
Personal essay



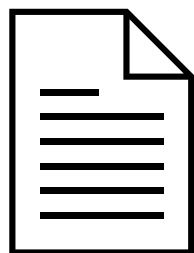
Statement or letter
of purpose



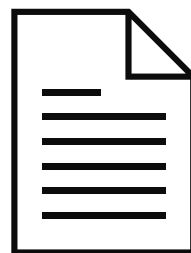
Research proposal
or research
statement



Supplementary
information form



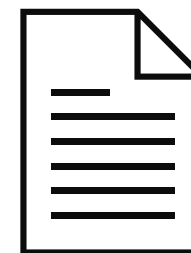
Secondary essays



Experience profile



Statement of
scholarly interest



Supplemental
application



What is the purpose of this genre of writing?

- One part of an application to a graduate or professional school program
- Used by admissions committees to adjudicate applications
- A chance for you to communicate directly with the admissions committee
- A chance for you to say things in human words



How will the committee evaluate my documents?



Motivation



Fit



Skills



Academic & professional preparation



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What can I write about?



Academics



Work, volunteer, extracurriculars



Identity and lived experiences



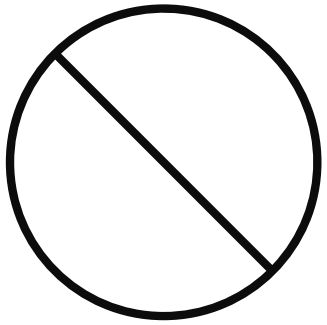
Goals for the future



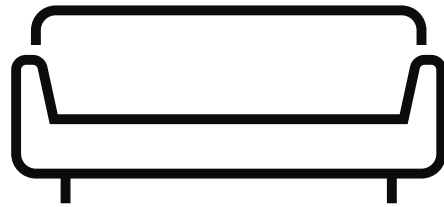
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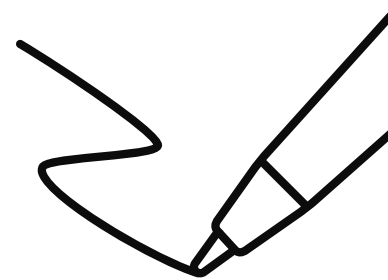
How do I disclose life stuff?



You don't owe
anyone a story



Trust your sense of
comfort with what
and how you share



Share details you
want to; it's okay to
leave some out



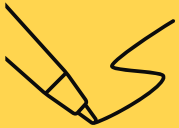
It's okay if this
brings up emotions
for you



What are the essay writing tips?



Brainstorm



Freewrite



Research



Match & adapt



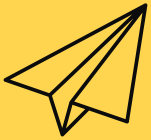
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What are the formatting conventions of this document?



Length



Addressing & submitting the document



Required parts



Ask for clarification



What are the unspoken conventions of this document?



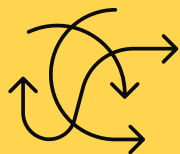
Essay-style



First-person narrative



Sharing experiences



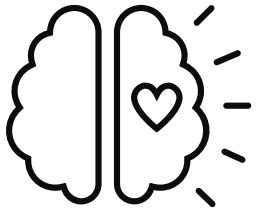
This is hard!



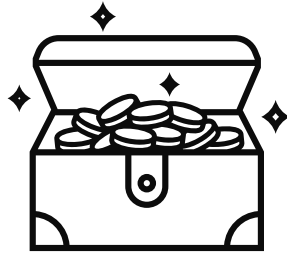
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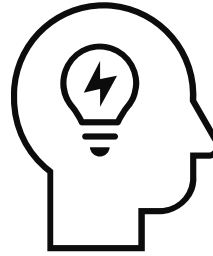
How do I know where and when to apply?



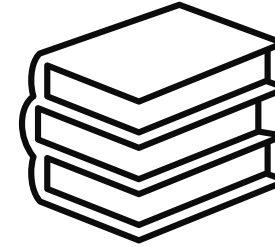
Mental
Health



Financial
Cost



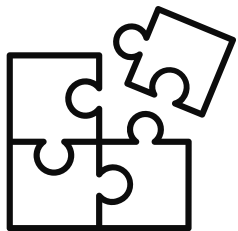
Motivation



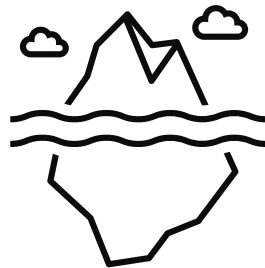
Skills



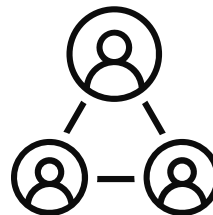
Research
Interests



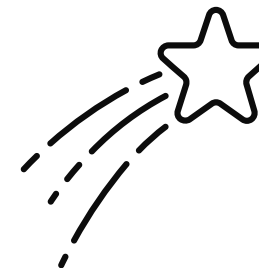
Fit



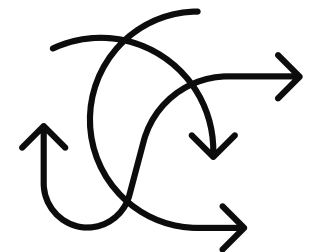
Work
Experience



Mentorship



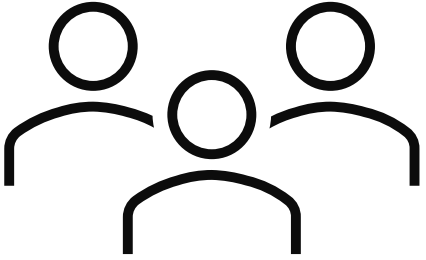
Goals



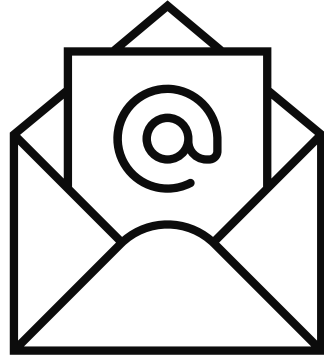
App cycle



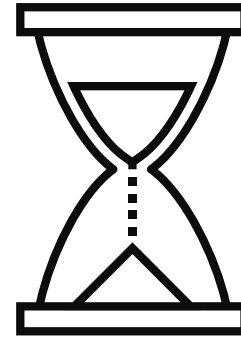
What do I need to know when reaching out to potential references?



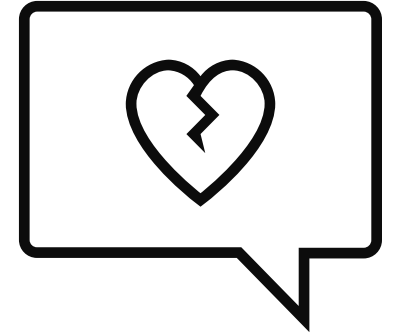
Who do I ask?



How do I ask?



When do I ask?



What happens if they say no?



The Ask - a template

Dear Dr. / Prof. [name],

I'm reaching out to ask if you would be willing to write me a positive reference for [specific program(s)]. I'm asking you because [I took X class with you and got X grade / as my supervisor you know my work best / I was your TA and hope you can speak to X].

The letter is due on [date] and will be [submitted electronically]. I have included a [link / attachment / instructions] with more information should you agree to provide the reference.

I have also attached my [unofficial transcript / resume / app materials/etc.] should they be helpful. I'm also happy to meet and chat further about my request.

Please let me know whether you can provide the reference and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Best / Regards / With care / whatever your go-to sign-off is

[Your name]

[additional context like student number / program / etc.]

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