

Annotated /  
Reviewed  
Example 1  
- Electrical  
Engineering

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE - ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING EXAMPLE ESSAY

My decision to pursue graduate study in the United States is underscored by my desire to be a part of the graduate program at your institution. Purdue University offers the flexibility needed for such a vast and rapidly changing field. The research facilities and the faculty at the university are par excellent.

Communications is an industry that has changed our lives. In a very short period it has changed the way we have looked at things since centuries. It is one industry that is going to shape our future for centuries to come. Hence my desire to do masters in electrical engineering with communications as my major.

My interest in electronics blossomed during my high school years. It was the time when technology had begun to make an impact on the lives of people in India. Hence engineering with electronics as my major was the first choice for my undergraduate studies. Right since the beginning of my undergraduate study electronics is a subject that has fascinated me with its power of applications. The subjects that I have studied include Linear Electronics, Digital Electronics. These laid the foundation for my courses in Electronic Communication & Communication Systems at a later stage. My undergraduate studies already focus on the communications aspect of electronics. A masters degree in electrical engineering with communications as major field is the next logical step.

For the past four months I have been working as a project trainee at the Indian Institute for Advanced Electronics. I am working on the design and development of a "PC Controlled Digital Serial Data Generator". This short stint has given me invaluable practical experience. It has given me the confidence to pursue a masters degree and also kindled a desire to do research.

During the course of my work at IIAE, I have come across several scientists. Most of them work in different areas of communications. Interactions with them have made me realize the vastness and the scope of communications. My discussions with them convinced me that specializing in communications will suit me very well.

The subject of research which interests me very much is spread spectrum communication systems. Coding theory and combinations is another research subject which arouses my curiosity. The subject Communication Theory which I am studying at present introduces these topics in theory. I am eager to find out more about the applications of coding theory to spread spectrum communication systems.

In addition I have been a student member of the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.) for the past three years. Through its workshops/seminars and publications like the 'The Spectrum' it has exposed me to a lot of emerging technologies in the field of communications.

It is a strong belief in my family that the American education system has the best to offer in the whole world. This belief arises out of the experience that my parents had when they did their Masters of Science in the University of Pennsylvania during the years 1967-69. If I can get an opportunity to be a part of that intellectually stimulating environment, I am sure my talents will be put to optimal use.

India is a developing country with an enormous potential in the information technology business. To serve the needs of this developing industry and more important its vast population, communications is going to become of utmost importance. Thus conditions here are very conducive to supplement my aspirations when I return after completing my graduate studies.

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Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:41 PM

**Comment [1]:** While it's accepted wisdom that you have to suck up to the university, doing that in the very first paragraph isn't always seemly. This is something that all applicants should be careful about. Something else that's essential in these personal essays is to sound natural. In this paragraph, 'underscores' and 'par excellent' ... [1]

Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:41 PM

**Comment [2]:** The stunted delivery is perpetuated in this paragraph. Also, the idea behind the first three sentences could have been expressed ... [2]

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**Comment [3]:** 'Have been doing communications, hence want to continue doing communications' seems like a facile point to make. ... [3]

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**Comment [4]:** The essay is considerably strengthened by his being able to convincingly convey his strong grounding in electronics. ... [4]

Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:42 PM

**Comment [5]:** It would have been so much better if the applicant had put across what it was about 'spread spectrum communication' etc instead ... [5]

Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:42 PM

**Comment [6]:** In addition I have been a student member of the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.) for the past three years. The ... [6]

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**Comment [7]:** The parents part comes a bit too late in the essay to carry any relevance. By now, you should be building u ... [7]

Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:43 PM

**Comment [8]:** Once again, in this paragraph you want to round off all the points you've been trying to make so far. Essentially you want to m ... [8]

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**Comment [9]: Summary:** This essay's brevity is its saving grace. Thankfully, it also gets apparent ... [9]

Annotated / Reviewed Example 1  
- Electrical Engineering

EE-India-SAMPLE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.docx

**Main document changes and comments**

Page 2: Comment [1] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:41 PM

While it's accepted wisdom that you have to suck up to the university, doing that in the very first paragraph isn't always seemly. This is something that all applicants should be careful about.

Par 1

Something else that's essential in these personal essays is to sound natural. In this paragraph, 'underscores' and 'par excellent' don't come across too well. This kind of awkward phrasing is best avoided.

Page 2: Comment [2] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:41 PM

The stunted delivery is perpetuated in this paragraph.

Par 2

Also, the idea behind the first three sentences could have been expressed in just one. Certainly could do with tightening.

Page 2: Comment [3] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:41 PM

'Have been doing communications, hence want to continue doing communications' seems like a facile point to make.

Par 3

And notice how the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs end on pretty much the same note.

Page 2: Comment [4] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:42 PM

The essay is considerably strengthened by his being able to convincingly convey his strong grounding in electronics.

Par 4 & 5

The 4th and 5th paragraphs mesh in ideas and content, but the essay loses continuity because the project has been spread over two paragraphs.

A project is generally a golden opportunity to convey personal growth, an issue whose importance cannot be understated. An applicant could do well to focus on how she grew as a result of her experiences. A project is perfect in this sense because it can be used to convey both personal and technical growth.

Page 2: Comment [5] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:42 PM

It would have been so much better if the applicant had put across what it was about 'spread spectrum communication' etc interests him. Remember that it's always prudent to bring out something about your intended major that strikes you personally.

Par 6

Page 2: Comment [6] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 4:17 PM

The essay now switches track to biography mode. If this had been placed before the 6th paragraph, the applicant could have possibly quoted

Par 7

something from the magazine that inspired him to take up communications as his major

Page 2: Comment [7] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:42 PM

The parents part comes a bit too late in the essay to carry any relevance.

By now, you should be building up to a conclusion and this particular essay is let down by bringing in family history this late.

Par 8

Page 2: Comment [8] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:43 PM

Once again, in this paragraph you want to round off all the points you've been trying to make so far. Essentially you want to make them want you.

By using a phrase like 'conducive to supplement my aspirations' in the essay, the applicant goes to show that we're still in the awkward zone.

Par 9

Page 2: Comment [9] Jane Lehr 11/14/13 2:43 PM

### Summary:

This essay's brevity is it's saving grace

Thankfully, it also gets apparent that the applicant has a strong case to make

But the essay fails the 'page preview' test. We generally advise applicants to look at their essay by reducing the size of the text to 50% of normal. Even after you've done this you try and decide what each paragraph stands for and then see if the paragraphs link.

As a follow-up to what we've said above, this essay barely has a coherent flow. You'd be able to recognize the interests-biography-project-project-interests-biography-conclusion pattern the essay follows. So while it has a lot of interesting elements, they don't add up in a holistic manner.

So we'd say that this essay would be an excellent early draft. With a little more thought and effort, it could have morphed into an extremely effective piece of writing. The moral is that initial drafts need strong follow-up action on your part.

Header and footer changes

Text box changes

Header and footer text box changes

Footnote changes

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

*The solutions all are simple - after you have arrived at them. But they're simple only when you know already what they are.*

Robert M. Pirsig

Statement of purpose

K. Hess (457-55-5462)

Growing up, I always loved math and sciences. I was that weird kid that liked calculus and algebra, and I thought that chemistry was fun. And because I excelled in those things, my Aunt Gin always told me: "Kinsey, the best way to use those interests and apply them to a career, is to pursue a profession in the healthcare field." So by the end of high school and throughout my college education at University of California Santa Theresa I took coursework intended to prepare myself for paramedical profession. After working for several years for California Fidelity, an insurance company, where I was a medical claims investigator, I realized that Aunt Gin was wrong assuming that calculus and algebra was my calling. Suddenly one day after seeing blue cabbage turning red in lemon sauce, I realized that it was the chemistry rather than actuarial tables that was my calling and life-long desire.

Thirty years old, I moved from California to the Midwest to finish my undergraduate degree as a bachelor of science in Professional Chemistry and I enrolled in University of North Indiana (UNI). I am currently second semester Chemistry Graduate Assistant at UNI. I have helped with chemical safety, inventory of chemicals, drying Sodium Chloride, gathering MSDS, preparing solutions, assisting teachers and storeroom assistant. I have assisted with organic chemistry, analytical chemistry, physical chemistry, chromatography, and mass spectrometry. I work with the following instruments on a regular basis: Varian 5890 GF/FID, Varian 3800/Saturn 2000 GC/MS with ion trap detector, Varian 666/Hades, Agilent 1100 Series LC/DAD/MS with an ion trap detector and eletrospray ionization, Pastoralaman/GSD great sensing device trainable attachment with chain and collar, Solution Calorimeter, Bomb Calorimeter, FTIR, ATR, ATV, and UV-VIS. I run blanks, prepare standards, run the SPME, change the tanks, perform autotunes, update log books, made SOP's for the instruments, performed troubleshooting on the instruments, shutdown and rebooted the instruments, supervised other students working on them, and made experiments for class by doing research. This is my second semester as a Chemistry Graduate Assistant at GSU and I now supervise and help the other three GA's that we have at Chemistry department at UNI with thier needs and I have 14 hours of classes that I GA. There needs are usually help with run the SPME, change the tanks, perform autotunes, and update log books. Before working as



GA I was a student worker at UNI for two trimesters and a Laboratory Student Aide at MVCC.

I did my undergraduate research on how familiar high school teachers are with the nature of science (NOS). My graduate research is on teaching the nature of science for high school students. I did research class on creating standard operation procedures for the instrumentation at UNI. I created an experiment of using SPME in the GC/MS lab to analyze water samples. I made standards and spiked water individually with different analytes and I reviewed the mass spectrum to look for molecular ions. Molecular ions can be Chromium, for example. Chromium is factor in developmental of children. Therefore Chromium affect is very important. When the students did the lab they are able to find what all of the components were in the sample by doing library searchers. I am looking to do research on detection limits of analytes on the GC/MS, LC/MS and other instruments, chemical ionization and SPME.

Being only an undergraduate student, my professor suggested that I apply to the chemistry graduate program at Flossmore College. I am looking to move forward with my education so that I can be a college professor. I want to be a college professor mainly because I want to continue to do research and teach. I am presenting some of my research on NOS at the FEMLAB meeting in Boston and I co-presented at the conference last year. I am doing a poster presentation at the ACS National Conference in 2011 on the "Glass GC" is a see though GC. The Glass GS is a see thought glass GS which can basically be seen into. The glass GC is used at UNI to teach students how to use, troubleshoot, and do routine maintenance on the instrument that is exactly like the one the we have in operation. I would like to focus on Physical Chemistry/Analytical Chemistry on the research that i do for my doctorate.

I love being in a laboratory and I will put forth my best effort to succeed in your program. I enjoy working with instrumentation and I love learning and figuring out new things. I have the desire and the will power to complete the program. I am self-motivated and I will keep up on my research without being reminded. I truly enjoy working in the lab and I want to make a difference in chemistry by continuing to do research. When I am in the lab and I figure out something new is what I thrive for. We do live in a changing world, when the old certainties are changing, and we see the emergence of new forces, new influences, and we enter into a time of tremendous uncertainty, but also of great opportunity. Aunt Gin, if she were still alive and did not die of Cancer, would be happy of my choices. I appreciate your consideration for your chemistry program.

# Reviewer Comments on Essay that starts w/ quotation by Robert Pirsig

- Annotated (Reviewed)

Example 2

- Chemistry

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Comments by Prof. Petr Vanýsek, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Do not start with a quotation, no matter how clever you think it is.

Do not put anywhere on your material your social security number, your birthday and any information that normally would be protected by affirmative action and the committee would not be allowed to ask about it.

You do not have to start with the words "Statement of Purpose," it is usually very obvious from the contents what the document is. However, include your name on top (or in the footer) of every document. If the documents get printed, the pages will get separated.

Your name (first, initial, last) should be sufficient. If your name is very common (e.g., Chris Smith) add your school or hometown after the name. Do not give your birthday; your age typically does not concern the admission committee.

Do not start with stories from your life; in fact, do not include them anywhere, unless really pertinent.

Do not mention your age – it should not be decisive factor.

Do not list all the instruments (especially specific models) or all the software that you can operate.

Avoid acronyms, and if you use any, explain them, unless they are very common or obvious to all the potential reader.

Do not force an acronym, which typically stands as a noun, into a position of a verb: "...and I have 14 hours of classes that I GA." and at minimum, write it so that if the acronym is sounded out ("graduate assistant") it makes sense. The example "... I have fourteen hours of classes that I graduate assist" sounds rather poor.

Do not get "their" possessive confused with "there" demonstrative. And no, there is no "thier."

Be terse and to the point. The above example states twice that the student is in her second semester – unnecessary repeat in this short text.

One page statement is usually long enough.

Use proper capitalization of words. Brand name instruments have to be capitalized:

"Varian 5890." However, "solution calorimeter" is a generic name and should not be capitalized any more than a "frying pan." Name of compounds (sodium chloride), elements (chromium) or diseases (cancer) are all examples where the first letter should be in lower case. On the other hand, first person singular nominative pronoun is "I" in a capital letter.

Learn to use properly than, then, effect, affect, effected, affected, appraise, apprise, adsorption, absorption, adjective vs. adverb (slow vs. slowly), good and well, and learn how use "whom" in a sentence.

Be aware of the dangling modifiers (you do not need to know the names to avoid them.):

The following: "Being only an undergraduate student, my professor suggested that I apply to the chemistry graduate program..." implies, if you think about it only a little bit, that the professor was an undergraduate student.

Limit description of family hardship to necessary minimum.