

Writing a research statement

Adapted from University of California San Francisco & Cornell University Graduate School
(source: <https://bit.ly/2GDr7Ap>, <https://bit.ly/2U68hVy> & <https://bit.ly/38mGKaX>)

A checklist can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3k7tk4H>

Research Statement Review Metrics:

- What are the major strengths of this statement?
- What are the major weakness of this statement?
- Is its length and content appropriate?
- Is your statement written at an appropriate level for scientists outside of your field to appreciate?
- Does your research statement tell a compelling narrative? Does it draw readers into your research “story”?
- Does it include appropriate references?
- Does it contain evidence of previous experience and expertise in the proposed research ideas?
- Did you present a plan of potential grant programs that you can apply to?
- Do you clearly show how your research is independence from your advisor’s research program?

What is a research statement?

The research statement is a common component of academic job applications. It is a summary of your research accomplishments, current work, and future direction and potential of your work.

What is the purpose of this statement?

- a. Convince the committee you will succeed
- b. Describe your short-term and long-term goals

The statement can discuss specific issues such as:

- Funding history and potential
- Requirements for laboratory equipment and space and other resources
- Potential research and industrial collaborations
- How your research contributes to your field
- Future direction of your research

General advice:

1. Be personal. This document is about you: who you are as a scientist, what interests you, where you see your research going in the future. Don’t make it solely about the research (like you would a research manuscript or grant). Use “I” instead of “we”.
2. Toot your own horn. Make sure to convey what will make you successful in your next endeavors. Some examples: your cutting edge approach, your unique insight or technological know-how, your success in previous projects, etc.
3. Don’t write it like a grant proposal. That’s too detailed (and probably too long) and could have two untoward consequences: Some readers will latch onto a detail of your proposal that they disagree with and ding you for it. Others will be overwhelmed by the details and fail to see the big picture. Remember that many committee members are not going to be familiar with your field.

4. Make connections. Whenever possible, acknowledge how your work would complement the research already happening at the institution where you are applying, or benefit from collaborations with members of the institution. (This is something you should definitely do in your cover letter as well.)
5. Beware of fancy formatting. Some readers are put off by a statement that looks too much like a published article in Nature. Also, some formatting gets mangled if you submit the application via an electronic submission process. So, check twice before you click the send button!
6. Tailor it for each academic position you apply for.