

**PERFECT
PHRASES**
for
**LAW
SCHOOL
ACCEPTANCE**



**Hundreds of Ready-to-Use Phrases
to Write a Winning Personal
Statement, Ace the Interview,
and Impress Admissions Officers**

Paul Bodine

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School Acceptance**

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Paul Bodine



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For Sid and Naomi

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Preface

The Juris Doctor (JD) is a powerful, versatile, well-remunerated degree—and an increasingly popular one. Today the world’s most selective law schools know they’ll receive enough applications boasting outstanding “numbers” (grades and LSATs) to populate multiple entering classes. For that very reason, they can afford to assemble not only the most intellectually capable class, but also the one whose sheer variety and distinctiveness is most likely to create the synergies that make education more than a merely academic experience. For each of the following applicant types, the personal statement (and supporting written documents) will likely be a deciding factor in the law schools’ decision to accept or reject:

- *Applicants applying to top schools:* Test scores and grades are so stratospheric that essays become the best way to distinguish the special from the merely great.
- *Applicants from underrepresented minority groups:* Essays enable these applicants to highlight their diversity qualifications.
- *Applicants who are neither presumptive admits nor rejects:* Essays give admissions committees (adcoms) the extra information they need to decide whom to admit.

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- *Applicants vying for the final slots in an entering class:* Adcoms can round out their class's diversity by learning, through the essays, which applicants offer something special.
- *Applicants with unusual stories:* The personal statement is still the best medium for applicants with exceptional experiences or backgrounds to communicate their stories to the admissions committee.
- *Applicants applying to non-index-driven law schools:* The less weight a school gives to the LSAT and grades (which together give adcoms a rough numeric gauge of applicants' potential law school success), the more weight it will give the personal insights disclosed in the personal statement.
- *Applicants who have mixed predictors:* To decide whether to admit a low-LSAT/high-GPA applicant (or the reverse), adcoms often turn to the personal statement.
- *Applicants applying to safety schools:* Here essays can have a negative impact: if they're bad they could motivate an otherwise admit-ready adcom to reject or "ding" you.
- *Low-index applicants to lower-tier schools:* When adcoms must choose from among applicants whose numbers are distinctly unimpressive, the essay can tip the scale.

The bottom line is this: the personal statement, secondary essays, addenda, and interview enable the admissions committees to look beyond the application data and see the person, to get a sense not only of what the applicant has done but why he or she has done it.

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It's not easy to write essays that find the sweet spot that best captures your uniqueness and potential contribution. This book's "perfect phrases" are intended to help you overcome the paralysis the blank PC screen can induce by providing sample wording you can use to bridge the gap between outline and first draft. Because generic writing is bad writing, you'll find that the phrases and examples included here are not "one-size-fits all" templates, however. They contain the concrete details—facts, names, places, numbers—that good writing always has. Feel free to use this book's perfect phrases as inspirational prompts, guides, even temporary "crutches" as you work toward a final draft that's expressed in your own words. When you reach the point where you're confident in the substance of your essays—when writer's block is no longer an issue—search for ways to turn any of the perfect phrases you've used into your own words. Both your writing and your odds of admission will benefit.

Letting this book's perfect phrases become a substitute for your own words defeats the purpose of this book and the admissions essay. Law schools don't admit applicants who sound like other applicants or who write what they think the schools want to hear. They admit real people who tell their own stories their way. Use these perfect phrases to help you do that and only that. Then your essays' phrases will truly be "perfect."

This book focuses on the law school personal statement, secondary essay topics and addenda, and basic interview question categories. Part One briefly guides you through the sometimes stressful process of writing admissions essays, from

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selecting your themes, developing your raw material, and preparing an initial outline to writing, revising, and editing your drafts. Part Two provides perfect phrases for the seven most common types of essays—about your personal life, upbringing or background; challenges and disadvantages; values or beliefs; accomplishments; interests or passions; the diversity you can contribute to your class; and your career and post-J.D. goals. Two chapters also focus specifically on perfect phrases for starting and concluding essays. All the written documents that you may have to submit in addition to the personal statement and essays—from addenda, conduct (or character and fitness) statements, and transfer essays to master of laws (LLM) essays, letters of recommendation, and wait-list letters—are the subject of Part Three. Part Four provides perfect phrases for the law school admissions interview.

It's my hope that the range and variety of examples in this book will help you to unlock the creativity and inner voice that are still the surest way to spark the admission reader's interest. If you have any suggestions for improving it, please e-mail them to me at paulbodine@live.com.

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Part I

Getting Started

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