

Dissecting the Personal Statement for Mountaintops and Aha Moments¹

Prompt: The personal statement is often an articulation of one's own "mountaintop experience," a coming to terms with how your past experience(s) guide your future objectives. The aha moment can be noted in many ways, but they all reference the same idea: clarity and the means by which it comes. This clarity can come all at once or over the course of time.

It is easy to get lost while explaining why this moment is meaningful. This exercise is designed for writers who want to consider how heavily the aha moment weighs in their personal statement.

Outlining: Take a few minutes to outline the current draft of your personal statement considering the categories below. It might be useful to use different colored highlighters or use the highlighting tool in your word processor.

***Note:** The categories are subjective and some sentences will be subjective as to the category in which they fall. As well, your aha moment might have come before any experience at all. That is fine. This breakdown should be about how you present your narrative under the conditions of the personal statement.*

Experience prior to the aha moment	_____%
The aha moment itself	_____%
What you have done as a response to that moment	_____%
Supporting thoughts (quotes etc.)	_____%

Does the outline match what you thought your breakdown should look like? It's ok if it doesn't. But what are the reasons for the difference?

¹ Adapted from Kristofor Larsen- New York University