

Impactful Experiences

If a school allows you to submit a statement discussing other impactful experiences, consider it as an opportunity to tell them more about some of your experiences and how these experiences have led you to your decision to attend law school. Talk to the personal statement editor and discuss your options.

WHAT?

An impactful experience statement focuses on your background and your place in the family and culture in which you were raised, while a personal statement focuses solely on you and who you are.

IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCES IS MORE THAN ...

Most of us hear impactful experiences and automatically assume it refers to a small range of human differences. This is not the case. The definition refers to the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as cognitive skills and personality traits, along with the things that shape our identity. For example, "At 19 when most of my friends were pledging fraternities, I found myself preparing to leave my friends and family for two years and go to Brazil where I would talk to others about my religious beliefs." Or "Growing up, there was one stoplight in my hometown." These experiences are different than what we traditionally consider diverse or impactful but are different than the majority of applicants and thus help highlight your own experience.

We strongly encourage you to consciously think about your upbringing to look for some aspects of diversity. Additionally, ask yourself, what have you done to understand others that are not like you? How has your life been changed by understanding others experiences?

ASSUME NO KNOWLEDGE

Your life may seem boring to you; however, the application committee has no idea what it is like to be you. This is your chance to tell them the little things about you and your background that make you different. Don't assume they know what it's like to grow up in a rural farming community or as one of the few LDS people in your high school. How have these experiences impacted your life?

PLAY AGAINST TYPE

Most of us have been stereotyped before—gamer, athlete, theater kid. What skills or interests do you have that don't fit the mold? An admissions committee may be surprised to find out that the gamer was also student body president, the athlete is an expert on Shakespeare, or the theater kid spends her time volunteering at a homeless shelter. These essays are about what makes you different from the mold. Figure out what kind of mold could easily be applied to you and then look for ways to tell the admissions committee how you break it.

DON'T GENERALIZE

The admissions committee is not looking for a treatise on your experience or how your stereotype is portrayed in society. Instead, like the personal statement, they want to know about you. The details that you provide about your life and your experiences are what an admissions committee can connect and relate to. Being specific in your impactful experiences statement is what makes it universal. Generalizing causes a person to simply "tune out."

DON'T APOLOGIZE

Too often an applicant apologizes for being white, middle-class, or male. Even worse is when applicants joke that due to affirmative action they are now a minority. The impactful experiences statement is not about what you are not—it is about what you are. You can always find something about your life, work, or school experience that sets you apart from other law school applicants—even if you think you come from a "typical" background.