

**Technical English for Engineers**  
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**Lecture – 36**  
**Writing a Statement of Purpose**

So, what is a statement of purpose? The statement of purpose is required at the time of applying to grad schools, or graduate schools, from where you want pursue another Masters, or PhDs, or some higher degrees. It is also called an application essay. While applying to universities abroad you call it a cover letter, and where you are supposed to write your objective for pursuing higher studies, in an international university.

SOP is one obstacle that can be very tricky. Your first SOP has every chance to go wrong. Here, I will just give you some tips on how things can improve, if you follow a few basic guidelines. Remember, SOP is your personal chance to impress the reader. And here who is the target reader? The person who is going to look at your funding, and your fellowship and also, basically, who is going to give you grant to admission in the university. And therefore, you must take care to craft the best possible SOP.

Remember that, you should know the audience and their intentions. SOP is the answer to a few questions; one major question is that, why do you wish to study at this particular school. Perhaps, you want to go to the University of British Columbia in Canada, then, you would, the funding agency, the committee that gives admission to students, to foreign students particularly, they would want to know that, why of all the places have you applied at UBC, that is University of British Columbia. So, that is something that you have to state very clearly, why do you wish to take a particular course? Perhaps, you want to follow, to pursue a higher degree in some, a specialized branch of electrical engineering. So, why do you want to do that particular course? What is your previous expertise in this field that is very important. Remember, only if you do very well at your undergraduate level, only then you will be even considered or even be in the running, to apply to these higher level institutes.

And then, what do you hope to do after the course. Once the course is over, how you are going to apply it to your other branch, or level of academics. So, what is the idea? What

is the purpose? And how is it going to be useful in your later life? More importantly, what good is that degree going to be in your, if you want to make any contribution to the field of academia. The application committee, remember may be looking for someone who has clear answers for all these questions, why you want to be there? Why you want to follow that course? What makes you the best person to give admission to? Therefore, one must choose your words carefully to express your interest in the chosen field. SOP should not be cluttered, or vague, and all over the place. You should know how to give direct and substantiated answers.

Remember, when you do SOPs, they are looking for a hardworking student, who can also make a kind of a contribution, to the research that takes place at their institute. They do not want a frivolous person coming their way. **So, Remember**, they do not want the trivial pursuits you have been engaged in. So, do not try to be extra clever, or be an entertainer for them. Remember that **the** committee is going to look for the details that make you a good grad student. List your experiences in academics and research. You should remember that, you have to make your SOP unique by adding interesting **but** relevant information. For example, write about the intellectual and academic discovery of your research interests, how and why you want to do this kind of a research. Remember, this would make your SOP one of its kind without losing any focus, if you choose to talk about and if you are able to talk about, how you zeroed in on this particular area.

The admission committee will be convinced of your interest in the field, if you tell them something more about what makes you so interested in this field. Always remember, like any other good instance of writing, before you send it out to the admission committee, revise the first draft with inputs from your professors, or seniors, people who have successfully gained admission to international universities. Always proof read for grammar and spell check; never do these things in a hurry. Always look for people who can give you some good pieces of advice.

So, one important section of writing an SOP is writing the introduction. So, introduce yourself, who you are, what are your interests and what sparked your desire for graduate study; and this part should be short and to the point.

Let us take a look this slide.

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## Sample Introduction

I am motivated to study abroad in order to broaden my international outlook while simultaneously strengthening my professional abilities. I am especially eager to become acquainted with different design styles and techniques. By collaborating with students and instructors from diverse backgrounds, I will be exposed to a wide range of ideas and styles; this, in itself, will be extremely valuable for my future career. Each country has something unique to offer in the field of architecture, and there are diverse styles and characteristics in the buildings, rooms and decorations; from the general appearance to the smallest details, an integrated, international society such as that in your university is ideal for gaining inspiration and acquiring sound training.

<http://essaysmith.com/index.php/sample-statement-of-purpose/87>

Let us read it together, and This is a sample introduction. Tell me if it is a good one or not so good one. 'I am motivated to study abroad in order to broaden my international outlook while simultaneously strengthening my professional abilities. I am especially eager to become acquainted with different design styles and techniques. By collaborating with the students and instructors from diverse backgrounds, I will be exposed to a wide range of ideas and styles; this, in itself, will be extremely valuable for my future career. Each country has something unique to offer in the field of architecture, and there are diverse styles and characteristics in the buildings, rooms and decorations; from the general appearance to the smallest details, an integrated international society such as that in your university is ideal for gaining inspiration and acquiring sound training'.

Now, this is not exactly an introduction of the first paragraph, but he is trying to tell you, what are those factors that helped him broaden his outlook and why he wants to gain admission in this particular university. So, look at the choice of words; grammatically it is quite a well-written passage. See, if the ideas are connecting and flowing appropriately. Another guideline would be that, you summarize your education history. Remember to include something about any kind of research you have conducted, a

project that you have done; do not forget to mention who your guide was, along with his or hers title and job responsibilities.

Write about the outcome of your research as well. Remember that, you should write technically, as the purpose of the SOP is to assert your academic potential. **If you have, then,** It is always good to mention papers that you have published with journal names. If you have completed relevant project mention that too. Such works, outside your regular curriculum vitae, they establish your passion for research and academics. Also, if possible, if you have done some internship, any work experience, which has relation to the field you have chosen to, or you have chosen to study at the grad school, all these things are important.

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### Sample: Details about yourself

My schedule at engineering college was filled with intense study and focused work for research and a variety of technical projects. I was active on many other fronts too. I am an active member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE). I have also been a part of the Electrical and Electronics Students Association (EESA) of my college. As an active member I was involved in organizing the EESA inaugural as well as the EESA week which consisted of seminars, presentations and various quiz competitions. I was also an active member of the team responsible for organizing 'The India Room' at the college festival during the second year of my Engineering degree. [http://www.geebeeworld.com/PDF/sop\\_electrical\\_ms.pdf](http://www.geebeeworld.com/PDF/sop_electrical_ms.pdf)

Look at this sample, and look at the way this person has given details about himself. 'My schedule at engineering college was filled with intense study and focused work for research and a variety of technical projects. I was active on many other fronts too. I am an active member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. I have also been a part of the Electrical and Electronics Student Association of my college. As an active member, I was involved in organizing the EESA inaugural as well as the EESA week which consisted of seminars, presentations and various quiz competitions. I was also an active member

of the team responsible for organizing 'The India Room' at the college festival during the second year of my engineering degree'.

So, this person is talking about the various activities which are relevant. Remember, he is not talking about that, he aced the dance competition or he was an ace guitarist at the university. Those things may help, if you are specifically asked for extracurricular activities. SOP is not about that; definitely not about highlighting those aspects of life. Always remember to indicate your current status, whether you are working or not. If working, what has experience taught you? What do you have, that gives you an edge? And how has it helped your research interests? Remember always, to elaborate on your academic interests and indicate, what you would like to study in graduate school in enough detail, to convince the faculty there that, you understand the scope of research in the discipline and are engaged with current research themes and practices.

Always remember to keep in mind that the admission committee will read between the lines of your SOP, for self motivation, competence, potential as a graduate student. So, remember to write in an active voice, with a positive perception of things. Remember, here is one instance, where you would be expected to use the active voice. This is not a report writing or description. So, you do not have to use the passive voice here. Remember that, self motivation and competence, and things like that; they come so positive, be positive and communicate positivity. Always show something, if you want to show that, or tell them that you are a very good student, a very bright student then what have you got there to show.

Give examples to prove your commitment to research and academics. For that, you have to start building your career, right now. You have to go for internships, for academic seminars, conferences, publish papers at in the college news letter and news paper. So, if you give examples like these, then it reflects that you are the academic sort. Always remember that, there should be continuity between paragraphs and maintaining focus throughout the SOP, and this is required in about 500 to 1000 good words, well selected, well chosen words, better than more words, where there is very poor organization.

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## Exercise

If we look through various databases available to ..... association between population increase/emigration and rate of increase in the number of vehicles, rush hour syndrome, current and upcoming major business areas, etc. we can find a connection among all these which will enable us find .....to our traffic woes like building intelligent traffic control systems or innovative routes that can ease traffic congestion, reduce fuel ..... and cut down emission. Corporate initiatives like IBM's Smarter Cities are using data mining principles to help give authorities the tools to analyze current problems or .....future ones from available data and find solutions pro-actively. \*I want to study Data Mining to work with such research companies and address some of the challenges most developing countries are facing today. University XXXXX' research group is conducting .....studies in data mining and would give me exceptional opportunities to develop my skills. I am especially interested in the fact that XXXX emphasizes areas that are sometimes in ..... outside of computer science. Similarly, I want to use my Data Mining knowledge in solving some real-time problems that cross .....boundaries. I would be excited to work under Prof. ---- because my objective of tackling real world problems is in accordance to his research interests.

Now, let us do this exercise here, and I would like you to take a look at this example from an SOP, and why this person wants to do his research at this university. I want you to fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

‘If we look through various databases available to dash association between population increase|emigration and rate of increase in the number of vehicles, rush hour syndrome, current and upcoming major business areas, etcetera, we can find a connection among all these| which will enable us find dash to our traffic woes| like building intelligent traffic control systems, or innovative routes, that can ease traffic congestion, reduce fuel dash| and cut down emission. Corporate initiatives like IBM’s smarter cities are using data mining principles to help give authorities the tools to analyze current problems| or dash future ones| from available data and find solutions pro actively. I want to study data mining| to work with such research companies| and address some of the challenges most developing countries are facing today. University dash research group is conducting dash studies in data mining| and would give me exceptional opportunities to develop my skills. I am especially interested in the fact that| dash emphasizes areas that are sometimes in dash outside of computer science. Similarly, I want to use my data mining knowledge in solving some real time problems that cross boundaries. I would be excited

to work under Prof. ', whatever name, what you do not need a blank word here, 'because my objective of tackling real world problems is in accordance to his research interests'.

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Choose your answers from the list below:

Usage, domains, anticipate, disciplinary, solutions, analyze, cutting edge

Now, fill in the blanks using these words: usage, domains, anticipate, disciplinary, solutions, analyze, cutting edge. And, here are your answers, in this order: analyze, solutions, usage, anticipate, cutting edge, domains, disciplinary.

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## Answers

Analyze

Solutions

Usage

Anticipate

Cutting edge

Domains

disciplinary

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## Full text

<http://www.msinus.com/content/statement-purpose-ms-thesis-cs-1414/#.VsnD6VN96RY>

The full text of this essay or this SOP is available at this link; please take a look.



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## Sources

<http://www.princetonreview.com/grad-school-advice/statement-of-purpose>

<http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/statement-purpose/>

<http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/gradapp/stmtpurpose.htm>

For more information,

<https://grad.ucla.edu/asis/agep/advsoystem.pdf>

Also, look at this slide. Here, I have given you a list of sources. Various kinds of SOPs, for various domains, some examples are available on these links.

Now, let us move on to do something else now, some usage and grammar. And I would like to talk to you about using, where to use to with verb and where to use the -ing form of verb. By -ing, I do not mean that, I am doing or redoing your continuous tense, but it is what generally we call it the gerund form of a verb.

So, 'to' when we use 'to' with a verb, remember, you have to distinguish between where it is a preposition phrase, and where it is an infinitive. So, remember 'to' is used to express a purpose, like I went to see my mother; 'to see' so 'to see' here is not a preposition phrase. When 'to' is also used, when it is used in accordance with complement of a verb; he loves to sing. Again, it is not a preposition phrase, but is complement of a verb. You remember, subject, verb, complement. Please revise those aspects also. Many a time, instead of 'to sing', people use, people may say; he loves singing or he loves to sing; he went to see his mother; he went seeing his mother. I have come across such sentences. So, he loves singing, may be correct, but he loves to sing, is also correct; but you should know the reasons, why these sentences and what these sentences are; the basic mechanics of these sentences.

We also use to plus a verb, in a situation where it is used to qualify a noun. For example, this is not the time to play. So, time is a noun; time to play; this is not the time to waste; this is not the way to work; this is not the approach to work. -ing form or gerund, is a noun made from a verb by adding -ing. The gerund form of the word, for example, read is reading. We can use a gerund as a subject as a complement or object of a sentence. For example, he is fond of traveling. Now, traveling is your -ing form of verb. We do not say, he is fond to travel. Let us see, seeing is believing. So, seeing is to believe; there is no such thing like that. The year, let us say, for another example, the year was spent in researching for the project. We cannot say, the year was spent to research for the project; in researching is infinitely better construction.

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### Exercise: To/ing

There was nothing left but.....(fight).

She was tired of.....(wait).

My wish is.....(do) a PhD in Electrical Engineering.

He preferred.....(study) medicine to engineering.

The scientist had .....(carry) out this research with very limited support.

He cannot go on .....(do) nothing.

He refused .....(believe) his professor.

Now, here is an exercise for you, where to use to and -ing form of verb. Please take a look. There was nothing left, but dash. She was tired of dash. My wish is dash a PhD in electrical engineering. He preferred dash to study medicine to engineering. The scientist had dash carry out this research with very limited support. He cannot go on dash nothing. He refused dash believe his professor.

Now, where will you say to, and where -ing; there was nothing left, but to fight. You are not going to say, there was nothing left, but fighting. She was tired of waiting. My wish

is to do a PhD in electrical engineering. He preferred studying medicine to engineering. See, just try to replace, he preferred to study medicine to engineering. The sentence does not really make much grammatical sense. So, he preferred studying medicine to engineering. The scientist had to carry out his or this research with very limited support. He cannot go on doing nothing. He refused to believe his professor. So, to and -ing forms, very important aspects of grammar; please take a more detailed look at these links. Take a look at the slide.

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### References (to /ing)

<http://english.stackexchange.com/questions/38964/how-to-use-to-v-ing>

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/verb-patterns-verb-infinitive-or-verb-ing>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/627/03/>

All your doubts and all your queries will be solved here, if you look at some and try to attempt some of the exercises given here.

Thank you very much and we will soon meet for our last session, perhaps next week and that would be how to write a good CV and cover letter.

## *Tags*

Reading English, English for Engineers, English words, English Exercise, Exercises in English, Grammar usage, English Grammar, vocabulary, words and phrases, spoken communication, written communication, English writing, English speaking, scientific English, report writing, CV, formal letter, Speech-Preposition, Noun Phrases, Countable and uncountable nouns, singular, plural, Modals and Voice, Tenses, Effective Speaking

Essay writing, word categories, word formation, collocation, academic writing, formal tone, paragraph writing, tone in writing, speaking tone, signal words, linking words, descriptive passage, hook, layout of an essay, contractions and abbreviations, Letter writing, fossilized error, understanding essays, Mechanics of Essays, publishable essays, compound noun

Letter writing, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, propositions, determiners, linking words, 'be' form, reading, listening, sentence, Subject, Verb, Object, Articles, comparatives, passive voice, Dictionary skills, Presentation, Punctuation, Suffix, prefix, Statement of Purpose