

Writing Your Teaching Philosophy Statement

Key **Functions** of a Teaching Statement

- Describe a context for your teaching
- Showcase your personal style of teaching
- Provide evidence of effective teaching
- Demonstrate self-reflective practice and development

Key **Characteristics** of a Teaching Statement

- Organized, selective, representative
- It is a document about *your* teaching, not teaching in general
- Integrated – each element supports and is supported by other elements
- Document evolves as your teaching does
- Includes information about student learning, not just what you (the instructor) did

*The self-reflective **process** of creating your philosophy statement is at least as important as the **product**.*

Ask yourself: If a stranger read my teaching philosophy statement, would they have a good idea what my teaching is about? Would a colleague reading it trust me to teach their students?

A useful mnemonic: GPA (goals, practices, and assessment)

Teaching Goals

What are your teaching goals and why?



Teaching Practices

How are your goals manifested in what you and your students do?



Assessment

How do you know these principles and practices promote learning?

Important things to remember:

- Your audience will be reading many of these statements. Make it easy for them to learn what they need to know about you. (Be friendly to skimmers.)
- Consider what will make you stand out in a positive way. It will not be unsubstantiated buzzwords or emotional effusiveness.

Resources:

- More advice, plus example philosophies: <https://tinyurl.com/y2sxydv5>



Writing a Teaching Statement: Getting Started & Best Practices

Questions to consider as you draft your philosophy:

- How do you conceptualize learning?
 - Students learn best by/when/who _____.
- How do you conceptualize teaching?
 - The role of the teacher is _____.
 - The purpose of education is to _____.
 - What does it mean to “teach”?
 - What are your personal values in the context of a teaching professional?
- What are your goals/objectives for your students?
 - How do you know that the students have learned what you would like them to learn?
- The most effective methods for teaching are _____.
 - I know this because _____.
 - Why do you select certain teaching strategies?
- What are some *specific* methods and techniques that you use in your teaching to achieve your goals for your students?
- The most important aspects of my teaching are _____.
- Which aspects of your teaching are you trying to improve?
- Why do you teach?
- Where do you get your passion for teaching?
- Do my classroom practices, course objectives, syllabi, grading policies, and other materials reflect my teaching philosophy?
- Are my teaching strategies and methods linked to my beliefs about teaching and learning?

Teaching Philosophy Statement dos and don'ts:

- Do keep it short (1–2 pages)
- Do use the present tense and first person
- Don't give idyllic BUT empty concepts (avoid standalone buzzwords)
- Don't repeat your CV
- Do research on the teaching institution and disciplinary trends (know your audience)
- Do provide concrete examples and evidence of usefulness of teaching concepts
- Do discuss impact of methods, lessons learned, challenges and innovations—how did students learn?
- Do discuss connections between teaching, research, and service
- Do demonstrate how your methods are effective
- Do ground it in your discipline but use language that many can understand
- Don't be a know-it-all; Do demonstrate that you are a reflective and thoughtful teacher
- Don't be condescending about your students
- Do proofread and make sure that it is well-written (your statement is also a writing sample of sorts)
- Do help your reader understand what it is like to be a student in your classroom. Paint a picture with your words.

Sources and Further Information

Cornell University-Grad School Career Services	https://goo.gl/gw8SHP
Ohio State University- Professional Development	https://bit.ly/3y08JJz
University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning-The Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Statement	https://goo.gl/XjrGZl
Texas Tech University- Teaching, Learning and Professional Development Center	https://goo.gl/zjgvec
Lang, James (2010). <i>Four Steps to a Memorable Teaching Philosophy</i> . Chronicle of Higher Education.	https://goo.gl/32KhQt
Karen Kelsky, <i>The Dreaded Teaching Statement: Eight Pitfalls</i> . The Professor is In (theprofessorisin.com).	https://goo.gl/qytr0r

Some suggested reading on teaching and learning (these can be used to refine your teaching and your statement):

Publication	Location
Bean, John C. (2011) <i>Engaging Ideas</i> (2 nd Edition), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.	In hardcopy
Walvoord, Barbara E., and Anderson, Virginia J. (2010) <i>Effective Grading: a Tool for Learning and Assessment in College</i> , 2 nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.	https://goo.gl/J0Pr3S
Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., & Norman, M.K. (2010). <i>How Learning Works</i> , San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.	https://goo.gl/0xHV7A
Huston, T. (2009). <i>How to teach what you don't actually know</i> . Chronicle of Higher Education, 55(42), A.25.	https://goo.gl/iGt1kw
Svinicki, M. D., McKeachie, W. J., & McKeachie, W. J. (2014). <i>McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers</i> . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.	Request via ILL at Penn State
Bransford, John D., Brown, Ann L., and R.Cocking, Rodney (editors) Washington, D.C. (2000) <i>How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School</i> , expanded ed. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.	https://goo.gl/bst6Ko
Lang, J. M., & Jossey-Bass. (2016). <i>Small teaching: Everyday lessons from the science of learning</i> . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.	https://bit.ly/2ON3t7R
Felder, Richard, and Brent, Rebecca Various materials:	https://goo.gl/51ojhT
Enerson, Diane M., Johnson, R. Neill, Milner, Susannah, and Plank, Kathryn M. (1997) <i>Penn State Teacher II: Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn</i> . University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.	https://goo.gl/yQ5b19
Chickering, Arthur W.; Gamson, Zelda F. (1987) <i>Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education</i> . Racine, WI: Johnson Foundation.	https://goo.gl/Qcu2jA

Activity: Writing Your Teaching Philosophy Statement

Part 1: A – Based on your experience as a teacher	Part 1: B - Based on your experience as a learner
<p>Think about one activity that you used in class recently, and answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What did you want students to learn from the activity? ✓ Briefly describe what the <i>students</i> did. ✓ Was it a successful activity? How do you know? ✓ What would you change next time? Why?	<p>As a way to begin putting a statement of your teaching philosophy into words, answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ When you were a new student in your field, what first helped you learn it? ✓ How do you want students to think about learning in your course? ✓ What kinds of things would you ask students to do (activities and assignments)? ✓ Why do you think those activities and assignments will be most effective?

Activity: Writing Your Teaching Philosophy Statement

Part 2

Explain your answers to a partner and listen to your partner's answers. Ask follow-up questions.
Identify goals / values / learning objectives.

Part 3

Revisit what you wrote in Part 1. Describe what you care about (goals/values/objectives), what it looks like (actions), and how you know it is effective (assessment).