Prompts and Formatting for Graduate School Application Statements

Get the Current Prompt
Find out from the current application what the prompt is for every program to which you want to apply. Prompts can be embedded in the current application so you might have to start the application to get access to the prompt.

The prompt from a previous year may not be the same as the current one.

Do not assume:
• you know what the prompt is
• go by what you’ve heard or read online that isn’t from the program itself
• the prompt is the same as last year

Understand the Prompt
Prompts often ask multiple questions at once:

Prompt example:
Your Statement of Purpose should be concise, focused, and well written. It should describe succinctly your reasons for applying to the proposed program at Burdell University, your preparation for this field of study, research interests, future career plans, and other aspects of your background and interests which may aid the admissions committee in evaluating your aptitude and motivation for graduate study.

The above example is actually asking three questions with the option to answer a 4th.

Know the Format Parameters
Find out what the formatting expectations are for your applications related to:
Not following formatting requirements gives the impression that you cannot or will not follow directions and can also weaken or even disqualify your application.

Consistency in formatting across applications makes reviewing them easier for admissions committees.

If you are not given formatting parameters, consider using:

- no more than 2 pages
- single spacing
- 11-point Times New Roman
- the same font for all of your application materials to create a polished look
- 1” margins on all sides (standard)

Font styles are not all the same size. Create more space in your essay. The below examples are both 11-point.

- Switching to a smaller style can shorten your statement. **Century Gothic
- Switching to a smaller style can shorten your statement. **Times New Roman

Commented [BP1]: not a typo... want in TNR font to compare with CG font