

# Writing Study Objective and Personal Statements

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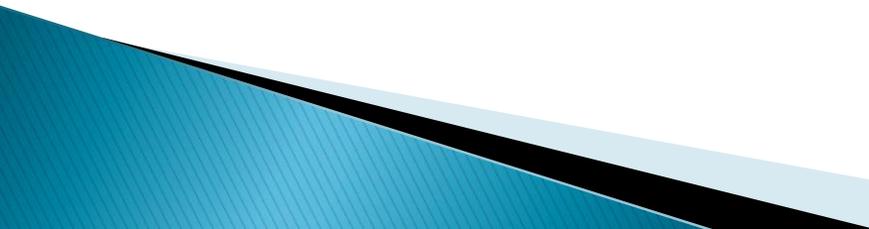
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# Statement of Objectives

- ▶ A clear, detailed description of your proposed project or grant activities
  - ▶ Describe area you want to specialize in
  - ▶ Describe purpose of studying in the U.S.
  - ▶ Provides timeline to complete goals
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# Questions to Answer

- ▶ What do you want to do?
  - ▶ Why is it important?
  - ▶ How will you do it?
  - ▶ What are your qualifications?
  - ▶ Can all readers understand your statement?
  - ▶ Can your project/goals be completed in the time you are in the U.S.?
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# A Good Statement of Objectives

- ▶ Identify project and goals early in statement
  - ▶ Address problems that provide valuable contributions to society
  - ▶ Do not use “jargon”
  - ▶ Do not repeat information already stated in the rest of the application
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## STATEMENT OF GRANT PURPOSE

April Conway, Sierra Leone, Ecology

Conservation of Pygmy Hippopotami (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) in Sierra Leone, West Africa

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**Purpose:** To help ensure the survival of the endangered pygmy hippo in West Africa by integrating technique development for increased understanding of life history, occurrence, abundance and distribution; identify high quality pygmy hippo habitat to improve habitat conservation and management; to then develop an effective pygmy hippo conservation management plan; and build local capacity for conservation, monitoring, and management. I propose to assess the following questions:

**Q1:** Where on the landscape are pygmy hippos active? What are important components of the landscape needed by pygmy hippos and does this conflict with human activities?

**Q2:** Do pygmy hippo movements and spatial distribution on landscape change significantly between dry and wet seasons?

**Significance:** The pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) is a unique and rare species found only in West Africa. It is listed as endangered<sup>1</sup> and is the only living species of its genus. There are many challenges to studying pygmy hippopotami in the field. They are shy, nocturnal, and reside in countries with long histories of political instability. Pygmy hippos are primarily crepuscular, feeding and moving through the forest in the late afternoon to midnight and in the early morning hours<sup>2</sup>. Pygmy hippos share superficial similarities with their relatives, the common hippopotamus; however, pygmy hippos are notably smaller, with an adult weight between 180-270kg, as compared to common hippos that can reach over 2,000kg. Pygmy hippos are more pig-like in shape, have longer legs, a smaller head, and a more sloping profile than common hippos. Their rare and elusive nature makes them difficult to study: visual observations seldom occur in the wild. However, this species can be studied employing a variety of indirect methods<sup>3</sup>. My study area is on Tiwai Island which is a 12 km<sup>2</sup> island located on the Moa River

# Personal Statement

- ▶ A personal narrative explaining your:
    - Educational experience
    - Practical experience
    - Career Plans
    - Personal motivations
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# Questions to Answer

- ▶ What has had an impact on your life?
    - Example: teachers, events, books
  - ▶ What has lead you to this point in your life?
  - ▶ Why should the committee choose you above other applicants?
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# A Good Personal Statement

- ▶ Explain your story in an interesting way
  - ▶ Engage the reader's attention from the beginning
  - ▶ Show your personality
  - ▶ Mention skills or resources that make your study valuable
  - ▶ Show, don't tell
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## PERSONAL STATEMENT

April Conway, Sierra Leone, Forest Resources

Conservation of Pygmy Hippopotami (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) in Sierra Leone, West Africa

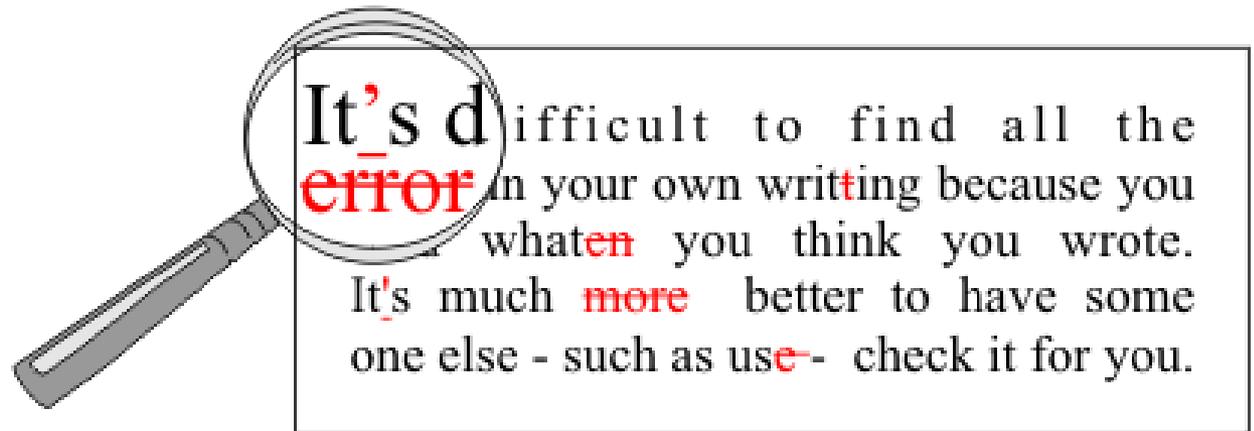
We paddled silently through the mud-brown water. The fierce African sun beat down on our backs. As we passed by a raffia palm, my field assistant Kenewa uttered a small gasp of surprise. There, in the water next to the riverbank, was the animal for which I had been searching diligently for over seven months. With a splash, the pygmy hippo clambered out of the water onto a sandy beach and stopped to watch us. Few people have ever seen these elusive creatures in the wild. This was the moment I had been waiting for, and I could not help but grin.

My passion for the natural world began early in life. My parents worked for airlines, which gave me the opportunity to travel the world. I remember my childhood expeditions by the animals I encountered: locking eyes with seals while snorkelling in the Galapagos Islands, swimming with dolphins in New Zealand, running from angry baboons trying to steal our ice-cream in South Africa. My professional journey began in high school, when I worked at a veterinary clinic, learning safe animal handling practices. In college, I explored wildlife rehabilitation on an island in Puget Sound and near the Everglades in Florida. My internships gave me experience working with and understanding both people and wildlife.

In 2001, I travelled with the University of Georgia (UGA) to Kenya on a study abroad to research primates. I fell in love with the landscape, the people, and of course the wildlife. As my plane departed, I vowed that I would return to Africa. I kept that promise. Peace Corps sent me to Niger, West Africa in 2005 to work as an environmental educator in a rural village. I lived for 2 years without electricity or running water in one of the poorest countries in the world. I was frequently sick with intestinal parasites and lost 80 pounds in a year. Despite these hardships, I loved every day and never regretted a moment. When I first arrived people were skeptical of me

# General Advice

- ▶ Have multiple people proofread and edit
- ▶ Respect space and word limits
- ▶ Correct spelling and grammar is essential
- ▶ Progression of 'story' or objectives should be logical
- ▶ BE INTERESTING!



# Study in the U.S. Overview

- ▶ 12 years of primary and secondary school
    - Elementary, middle and high
  - ▶ 4 years undergraduate study (bachelors degree)
  - ▶ 2 years for Masters
  - ▶ 4–6 years for Doctorate
  - ▶ Public/private schools
  - ▶ 4,000 + universities /colleges in the U.S.
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# Study in the U.S.

- ▶ Cultural differences –
    - “Time is money”
    - Independence
    - Competition
    - Pride in personal achievements
    - Self-motivation
  - ▶ Diversity
  - ▶ Hierarchy relaxed
  - ▶ Strict plagiarism rules
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# Advice

- ▶ Introduce yourself to professors and fellow students
  - ▶ Join school groups /extracurricular activities
  - ▶ Become proficient on the computer/internet
  - ▶ If you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it!
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**Thank you!!**

