

## Writing a letter of motivation:

- Choose a focus for your essay that will illustrate why this opportunity will benefit you and what you can bring to the organization. It is often helpful to frame your essay around a particular experience that helped you to realize important truths about your direction in life. Consider starting with such an anecdote.
- Remember that the people reading your application are looking for a good “fit” – they want to know what you will bring to the program, not just what it will offer you. You want your essay to entice them to learn more about you.
- Use your essay to tell a story in which the next logical step is the program you are applying for (student teaching, studying abroad, etc.).
- Don’t just state your passions. Instead, explain how they developed and why you want to pursue them further – and how this program or opportunity will allow you to do so. Similarly, demonstrate your academic interests with examples of work you have done.
- Discuss unique aspects of the program that have particular meaning to you. For example, many universities offer students the chance to attend seminars on subjects outside their own college or department; how would you take advantage of this opportunity? You might also indicate interest in joining particular clubs that don’t exist in the same form in Germany. If you are applying to teach, remember that you will be able to interact with other teachers as well as students, so present yourself as a good colleague.
- Avoid telling the admissions staff too much about their own institution. They already know how great they are. If you want to mention specific facilities that interest you, point out how they will be of particular use or interest for you rather than simply praising them.

## Writing a narrative *curriculum vitae*:

- The purpose of the narrative CV is to explain how you came to point you are now - why you made the choices you made and how they influenced your decision to spend time abroad. Think of it as a personal or intellectual biography that gives a sense of who you are as an individual.
- You do not need to repeat information that you have already listed somewhere else on the application. Instead, you need to interpret relevant experiences and show how they shaped you as a person (so instead of writing “I won an award for school council service in 2008”, write “My experiences as a school council member not only taught me a great deal about cooperation and negotiation but also made me realize how much I enjoy working as part of a team.”)
- Unless your parents’ occupations, the location of your birth, the elementary school you attended or the number of siblings you have are important for some other point you want to make, you can safely leave them out.

- Many, many CVs begin with “My name is... and I was born ...” If you can think of another way to start, do so.
- Don’t be afraid to include personal anecdotes. You want to make your CV unique.
- Explain why you like your hobbies and what you have learned from them rather than simply listing them.
- Don’t feel like you have to articulate a concrete career goal unless you are pursuing a teaching degree and applying for a teaching assistantship.

### Writing tips:

- If you can make your point with fewer words, do it.
- Make every sentence count!
- Whenever possible, use a concrete word instead of a vague term; highlight a specific experience instead of a general lesson; and balance use of active and passive voice.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread!!! A grammatical error is excusable for a non-native speaker, but a typo is sloppy and indicates carelessness.

### Potentially useful words and phrases:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • My experience as .... convinced me that ...   | • What draws me most to ... is...   |
| • I discovered/realized that...   | • ... I gained an appreciation of/new insight into...                                   |
| • My responsibilities as ... have taught me about the importance of...                        | • This program presents me with the valuable/unique opportunity to...                   |
| • I am eager to apply/hone/develop/consolidate my skills as a .... in a new setting           | • I am excited about ...  |
| • It will be a pleasure to exchange ideas with/interact with/learn from/gain insights from... | • This program would expose me/challenge me to ...                                      |
| • ... take advantage of opportunities to...   | • I am particularly interested in/have a keen interest in...                            |
| • ... explore/develop/expand/cultivate my strong interest in...                               | • Experience/Project/Job X demonstrated that I could combine my interests/passions .... |
| • I welcome the opportunity to...   | • I realized I have a knack for...  |
| • ... allowed/encouraged/permitted/taught me to...  | • ... comes naturally to me ...   |
| • I envision for myself a career in...  | • ... deepened my appreciation for/understanding of                                     |
| • I gained a sense of...  | • I want to develop a firm foundation in...   |
| • ... sharpened my desire to/interest in...   | • The program appeals to me/attracts me/intrigues me because...                         |
| • I look forward to...  | • I hope to contribute to/offer/share...  |
| • I am confident I will gain/learn/benefit/profit from ...                                    |   |

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