Personal statement example

<http://www.oocities.org/heartland/flats/5353/classes/essays/essay3.html>

A beluga whale helped me first realize my true academic passion. I spent my high school summers and weekends volunteering at the New York Aquarium, first in the education department, and later in the training department. It was there, through casual and research-oriented observations of cetaceans, that I began to wonder about animal and human minds. I later had the opportunity to participate in an observational research project, helping to record data on the behaviors of new whale calves and mothers. My informal and formal observations fed my interest in the phylogenetic and ontogenetic bases of cognition and language.

As a psychology student at [my school], I had numerous opportunities to research and observe human psychology, both in and out of the classroom. As a sophomore, along with a professor and fellow students in a seminar class, I helped design and run a study on categorization and user's intentions. Later that year we presented our findings at the annual American Psychological Society meeting. In that same year I also assisted a professor in conducting a study on the effects of familiar and unfamiliar music on reading comprehension.

I spent the summer following my sophomore year (1997) as a research assistant in the [my school] Psychology Department, funded by a grant from the Howard Hughes Foundation. I collaborated with a professor, a fellow undergraduate student, and a visiting high school student to research, design, and run a study on attitudes towards germs and illness. This included conducting an extensive literature review, specifying research questions, and designing questionnaires that would help us effectively answer our research questions. In addition to strengthening my research abilities, this experience gave me the invaluable opportunity to interact with fellow researchers as a student, a peer, and a mentor.

My extracurricular research experience during my sophomore and junior years of college gave me the tools to independently develop and carry out research projects. During my senior year at [my school], I completed a long term library-based research project on the evolution of the human linguistic ability. As a person who tends to look at the big picture when conducting research, this project was the perfect opportunity for me to integrate research from numerous fields and subfields in order to answer a psychologically based question. Through the study of anthropology, paleoneurology, neuropsychology, linguistics, and psycholinguistics, I explored theories debating the neurological and behavioral bases for language evolution. Although I do not envision the study of language evolution as being my main focus in graduate school or beyond, I still hold an interest in the field. As soon as I complete my graduate school applications, I plan to start preparing peer commentary articles on this topic for the on-line journal *Psycholoquy*.

My current research interests include language acquisition and cognitive development. I would like to study the relationship between language acquisition and the development of other cognitive processes. More specifically, I am interested how the development of metacognition and concepts affects and is effected by semantic and lexical development in toddlers and preschoolers. This research interest has developed over the greater part of the last decade; starting with my observations of behavior development in beluga whales, and shaped by my in depth study of cognition and language as a college undergraduate.

I feel that my research interests fit extremely well with the psychology department at [school I am applying to], and in particular with professors [a professor] and [another professor]. I would be elated to have the opportunity to study in a department where there is such a plethora of researchers who study cognition and development. The breadth of research done at [school I am applying to] would allow me not only to pursue my interests in depth with talented researchers, but would also allow me to eventually pursue some of my secondary interests in other areas of cognitive development.

It is because of these fabulous opportunities that [school I am applying to] is my top choice for graduate study. I am confident that graduate study at [school I am applying to] would prepare me well for my long term career goals. I wish to eventually hold a tenured position at a college or university, where I would have the opportunity to do research and to act as a teacher and mentor to undergraduate and graduate students. My undergraduate experiences at [my school] have fostered my love of and dedication to research, and provided the necessary tools to pursue my goals. I know that the opportunity to study at [school I am applying to] would allow me to grow as a student and researcher, and allow me to make significant contributions to the field of developmental psychology.