Respond to the instructions & requirements

• Any instructions on font, margin size, line spacing & word count?
  • If none, use 11- or 12-point Times/Times New Roman or Arial
  • If none, target one-page
  • If none, skip a line between paragraphs

• Use any instructions on suggested content as (temporary) headers
  • Example from AAMU REU: “Brief narrative that discusses your interest in this program, and your long-term career goals (your background and your interest in research -- what projects have you been involved with in the past, if any; and do you prefer experimental or theoretical work.)”
  • Probably remove temporary headers before submission

• Make sure you address any review criteria (if stated)
Know your audience — write for the reviewers

• Do your homework on the REU site — describe why the specific REU is a fit & connect to the program
• Reviewers typically read lots of statements — be clear, concise & complete
• Opening paragraph is key (ruin the story!) — stand out in a crowded field & make life easy for the reviewers
• Be cautious of jargon and abbreviations (define abbreviations)
• Start early and expect to have multiple drafts
• Have trusted friends/colleagues/mentors/faculty be “reviewers” and provide constructive feedback
• Are the reviewers experts or generalists?
Style

• Use a **positive, active** voice and **first** person
  • “I changed the water bottle...” vs. “The water bottle was changed...”

• Avoid hyperbole – use real personal instances/examples

• Be specific about **outcomes**

• Use **spellcheck** for grammar and spelling, vary word use, check for hyphenation

• Pay attention to how your statement flows and use **one** voice

• Break up really (really) long sentences & paragraphs

• Again, ask someone with experience to read for clarity and impact

• Avoid lots of sentences starting with “However”
Electronic forms

• If you have to cut and paste to an electronic form then check:
  • Has the formatting changed?
  • Special characters not recognized?
  • White space between paragraphs removed?

• Proofread the electronic form version before submitting!