

PERSONAL STATEMENTS AND ESSAYS

Many students anguish over the personal statement. Spending a lengthy amount of time perfecting your essay can pay off in interviews and acceptances, since admission officers carefully scrutinize personal statements and supplementary essays. Most application forms will ask for a one-page essay on any topic you select. The personal statement is your first chance to provide a health professional school committee with subjective information about your qualifications and your reasons for choosing a particular career. You will want to describe your special strengths, which you feel you offer the profession, and discuss what makes you a unique individual, who is deserving of a closer look.

Below are some suggestions about what to include in the essay:

1. In several sentences, who are you?
2. If you have something in your background that you feel needs to be explained, do it in your personal statement. If you had to take a year off due to illness or had a difficult term because of a heavy workload, explain it here. Make the explanation as positive as possible.
3. Cover a few topics in some depth, deciding what is really important to you and discuss it.
4. Answer the ultimate question: why medicine. Describing yourself and your accomplishments is important but what they are looking for is how it helped you decide on medicine and how these experiences have prepared you for the career. What is your attraction to medicine?
5. Be honest in what you discuss.
6. What are your goals for a career in medicine? How do your values fit in with a medical career?
7. Anecdotal event are often more effective than purely descriptive passages. Anecdotes about unusual topics are often informative and more interesting reading for the admissions committee.
8. The interviewing committee will read your personal statement. Therefore, be comfortable enough with your topic to talk about it in the interview.

The following are some cautionary points:

1. Do not write in the third person. Yet do not begin every sentence with the personal pronoun “I,” because it sounds egotistical.
2. Avoid delving into controversial topics in politics and religion. Your statements could alienate the reader.
3. Avoid making apologies for your past, particularly with grades. If there is a relevant point about why you have a C in physics then share it, but avoid excuses.



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4. While expressing your uniqueness, do so within the usual parameters of a personal statement. Personal statements are not the place to experiment with format or avant-garde ideas. Err on the side of a conservative style.

Ensure the quality of your personal statement by having several people proofread your essay. Have a proofreader examine it solely for grammar and spelling errors, and have another proofreader examine interest level of content. As you read it, ask yourself, “would I be interested in talking with the person who wrote this essay?” Allow at least a month to write your personal statement. Expect to have several drafts written before the final product.



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