

PRE-HEALTH PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

The purpose of the personal statement is to convince the Admissions Committee members that you belong at their school and, eventually, in their profession.

Important Intangible Qualities in the Health Professions

Motivation	Diversity	Sensitivity
Commitment	Uniqueness	Communication skills
Sincerity	Interest	Humanitarian beliefs
Honest	Compassion	Enthusiasm
Maturity	Empathy	Creativity

AMCAS allopathic medical school admissions personal statement guidelines

Use the Personal Comments essay as an opportunity to distinguish yourself from other applicants. Some questions you may want to consider while writing this essay are:

- Why have you selected the field of medicine?
- What motivates you to learn more about medicine?
- What do you want medical schools to know about you that hasn't been disclosed in another section of the application?

In addition, you may wish to include information such as:

- Special hardships, challenges or obstacles that may have influenced your educational pursuits.
- Commentary on significant fluctuations in your academic record that are not explained elsewhere in your application.

Your personal statement can be up to 5,300 characters (about one and a half pages single-spaced).

AMCAS MD/PhD additional essay guidelines

If you are applying to an M.D./Ph.D. program(s), you are required to provide two additional essays. Use the M.D./PH.D. essay to state your reasons for pursuing the combined M.D./Ph.D. degree. Your responses will only be forwarded to your designated M.D./Ph.D. program(s). This essay is limited to 3,000 characters.

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In addition to the M.D./PH.D. essay, you are also required to provide an essay that describes your significant research experiences. In your statement, please specify your research supervisor's name and affiliation, the duration of the experience, the nature of the problem studied, and your contributions to the project. This essay is limited to 10,000 characters. If your research resulted in a publication on which you were an author, please provide the full citation in the Work/Activities section of your application.

AADSAS Dental school admissions personal statement guidelines

Your Personal Statement should address why you desire to pursue a dental education and how a dental degree contributes to your personal and professional goals. You are limited to approximately [one](#) page (4,500 characters, including spaces).

AACOMAS Osteopathic Med school admissions personal statement guidelines

This section should be used to complete any questions that require additional space. If you answer "Other" to question 9 (How did you learn about osteopathic medicine?), or "Skilled trades (other)", "Health care related (other)", or "All others" to question 12 (Select from the list what best describes your prior career/experience), explain fully in this section. You may also provide a brief explanation of your goals. We encourage you to provide your motivation for applying to the field of osteopathic medicine in this section. Your personal comments are limited to 3000 characters including spaces (approximately 500 words). Do not submit separate or extra sheets.

VMCAS Vet school admissions personal statement guidelines

Use the personal statement to help admission committee(s) learn about you as a person, about the development of your interest in veterinary medicine, and about your career goals. You have 6,300 characters for your response. Use the explanation statement to record information that could not be listed within the Web application, such as breaks between experiences, or anything you wish to inform the colleges about regarding your application.

Approaches to Brainstorming for the Personal Statement

Each of these approaches is meant to get you to start think about who you are, what you've done, and what you value. Trying to start with a specific question can cause writer's block in some people – starting with these broad ways of writing may help. If you prefer to work from a specific question, check out the examples on the next page.

1. **Inventorying.** Thinking back as early as you can remember, make a list of your activities and accomplishments. Include hobbies, work, awards, memorable class assignments – anything that comes to your mind as an activity or an accomplishment. Try to write for at least half an hour.
2. **Freewriting.** This is a technique by which you start writing (or typing), and continue without pause for at least 15 minutes (set a timer as you start). Set yourself on a topic, or even a word or phrase, that interests you (e.g., "Why I want to be a doctor," or "medical ethics"), and just write. Don't worry about grammatical correctness – just let your brain go wherever it decides to go. Eventually, your subconscious starts to take over, and the creativity flows more easily. You may be able to find three or four topics within a freewriting exercise that could be fleshed out.
3. **Top Ten Lists.** Make a list of your favorites in areas such as movies, books, classes, activities, people in your life, places you've visited. Step back and look for themes, what the things say about yourself, or items on the list that might have particularly motivated you.

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4. Outside opinions. Ask ten people in your life to describe to you why they think you'd make a good doctor, either in person, or in writing. See whether any themes arise.
5. Journaling. Get into the habit now of writing in a journal (online or on paper), chronicling your thoughts about medical school admissions, being a physician, and your day to day life in general. Your writing will improve, you're likely to come across some ideas or stories that you could turn into a personal statement, and it'll be less scary to think about writing the personal statement if you're writing entries of a similar length on a regular basis.
6. Autobiography. Start in childhood, recounting memories, events, etc. that were important to you. Don't focus specifically on medicine – just on who you are and what's important to you.
7. Matching qualities with experience. Start with three to five key points you'd like to make about your unique qualifications for becoming a medical professional, i.e., personal characteristics that will make you a good professional, values you hold, things you'd like to accomplish. Match these with specific experiences from your life that demonstrate these qualifications (times you've expressed your values through actions, work you've done toward accomplishing your goals, etc).

Advice from www.essayedge.com

The most important part of your essay is the subject matter. To begin brainstorming a subject idea consider the following points. From brainstorming, you may find a subject you had not considered at first.

- What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to accomplishments you have been formally recognized for since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have been trite at the time but become crucial when placed in the context of your life.
- Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
- What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond? Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?
- What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends characterize you? What would they write about if they were writing your admissions essay for you?
- What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?
- What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular university fit into your plans for the future?

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If after reading this entire page you do not have an idea for your essay, do not be surprised. Coming up with an idea is difficult and requires time. Actually consider the questions and exercises above. Without a topic you feel passionate about, without one that brings out the defining aspects of you personality, you risk falling into the trap of sounding like the 90 percent of applicants who will write boring admissions essays. The only way to write a unique essay is to have experiences that support whatever topic you come up with. Whatever you do, don't let the essay stress you out. Have fun with the brainstorming process. You might discover something about yourself you never consciously realized.

Do's and Don'ts

What follows is a list of general guidelines as to what is desirable and what is not so desirable in a personal statement.

Do's:

- Do start early and allow plenty of time for several drafts and multiple revisions.
- Do choose one theme/thesis that unifies your essay.
- Do think about your values and motivation for medicine before writing the essay.
- Do be as specific as possible about why you want to study for and join your chosen health profession.
- Do use the word "I" if you want to, but don't if it makes you uncomfortable.
- Do talk about how your uniqueness makes you a good candidate.
- Do use examples of personal struggle to highlight character traits or accomplishments.
- Do provide the reader with insight into what drives you.
- Do evaluate your experiences, rather than simply recounting them
- Do write in your own voice. Be yourself rather than trying to be the ideal applicant.
- Do think about the impression you are making on the reader.
- Do use active verbs. It is good to sound confident (without sounding obnoxious or pretentious).
- Do use a spell checker. Schools detest misspelled words and bad grammar.
- Do enlist others to read and proofread your essay.
- Do get feedback on your draft(s) from your advisor before your Board interview.
- Do take your essay to the Writing Center before you submit it to schools.

Don'ts:

- Don't use the word "dream."
- Don't write an expanded resume; avoid repeating information that you've provided elsewhere in your application.
- Don't lie, cheat or steal. Embellishing your personal stories to make them try to sound "better," having your friend the English major write your essay for you, or "borrowing" ideas from other essays you've read are obviously bad ideas. You want this to be your own work, and something you'll be able to talk about at your interviews in an honest and detailed manner.
- Don't try to cover too much.
- Don't talk about emotionally-charged experiences if you cannot do so in a fairly professional manner at an interview.
- Don't use clichés or tired metaphors ("It was a dark and stormy night...")
- Don't talk about how bad all current health professionals are and how much better you will be.
- Don't mention "hot topics" like abortion, managed care, or assisted suicide.
- Don't talk about salary and how much money you would like to make.
- Don't talk about how wonderful you are. Let the Board take care of that.

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- Don't list the qualities that you believe make you a good candidate. Rather, it should be self-evident from the essay what positive character traits you gained from your experiences.
- Don't say that you want to be a doctor because your mother/father is a doctor.

Additional Resources

Health Professions Resource Library

The Office of Pre-Professional Advising and Fellowships has "Write for Success, Preparing a Successful Professional School Application" from NAAHP and two other books, "Essays That Will Get You Into Medical Schools" and "Essays That Worked For Medical Schools" that you can read.

Adelphi University's Learning and Writing Centers

Adelphi's Learning and Writing Centers located in lower level of Earle Hall offer free tutorial services on writing assignments across the disciplines at any stage of development. They can help writers with brainstorming and focusing their topics, building strong arguments, using evidence and citations effectively, and learning drafting and editing strategies through one on one consultations. You may visit their website for further information at <http://students.adelphi.edu/learningcenter/> and <http://students.adelphi.edu/writingcenter/>.

Essay Workshops 101 from Student Doctor (sponsored by Essay Edge):

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/essays/index.asp>

[Lesson One: The Audience](#)

[Lesson Two: What "They" Look For](#)

[Lesson Three: Brainstorming a Topic](#)

[Lesson Four: Tackling the Question](#)

[Lesson Five: Introductions](#)

[Lesson Six: Editing Checklist](#)