

CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

TIPS FOR WRITING A WINNING PERSONAL STATEMENT

Everybody is "hardworking, disciplined, and dedicated to delivering excellent health care." That is boring! What makes you stand out? Talk about personal issues, life-changing events, your family, goals, interests, and expectations of residency programs. The bottom line is that you want your personal statement to be outstanding and linger in the readers' minds.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRITE:

- What is special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field – through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example; integrity, compassion, or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession?
- Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example: leadership, communication, or analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school – and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

WHAT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Why you have chosen to pursue a particular specialty?
- What you are looking for in a program?
- What you have done between college graduation and applying to programs (explain gaps in time)?
- What is your background?
- What are special/different/unusual/unique accomplishments/talents/honors that you possess?

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Find an angle

- If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

- The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell what you know

- The middle section of your essay might detail your interest and experience in your particular field, as well as some of your knowledge of the field. Too many people graduate with little or no knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the profession or field they hope to enter. Be as specific as you can in relating what you know about the field and use the language professionals use in conveying this information. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're suited to it. Since you will have to select what you include in your statement, the choices you make are often an indication of your judgment.

Do some research, if needed

- If a school wants to know why you're applying to their program rather than another program, do some research to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities or programs. If the school setting would provide an important geographical or cultural change for you, this might be a fact to mention. It is also helpful to mention the faculty and research being conducted at that program regarding why you are interested.

Write well and correctly

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully. Many admissions officers say that good written skills and command of correct use of language are important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits – they are not a recommendation, but a guideline. Cut the fluff. Make sure if someone would read one sentence in your personal statement, they would learn something meaningful about you and why you are a good fit.

Avoid clichés

- A medical school applicant who writes that he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought. Stay away from often-repeated or tired statements

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PERSONAL STATEMENT BRAINSTORM

Part of the graduate school application process is writing personal statements. We recognize that writing about yourself is not easy so we are here to help! Below can help begin the process with thinking about the many things that make up who you are!

Brainstorm relevant points for your personal statement (bullets/keywords only):

<p>Why _____ ? (your field of study)</p>	<p>Academic background</p>
<p>Relevant experiences Projects, outreach, jobs/internships, volunteer work, challenges you've overcome that show persistence and resourcefulness</p>	<p>Accomplishments Leadership; Initiatives; Awards/Honors</p>
<p>Research experience, potential, & skills intellectual merit of your research</p>	<p>Broader impacts & societal relevance of your research</p>
<p>Interests/Values</p>	<p>Other relevant skills Ex: Communication, collaboration, analysis, creative problem solving, persistence, etc.</p>

Additional questions and items to consider

- What is special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about your life or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people, or events have shaped you or influenced your goals?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that had further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- What are your career goals?
- What are compelling reasons can you give the admissions committee to be interested in you?
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