



The Personal Statement for Health Professional Schools

A personal statement is a narrative in which the writer chooses a theme or thesis to relate aspects of himself or herself to the admissions committee, as a required part of the application process to medical school or other health professional program. Since most personal statements are "open" and do not specify topics, a major challenge to the writer is to select the topics you cover within the theme, while remembering that you cannot cover everything about yourself.

Structure in the Personal Statement

Theme/focus: Your personal statement can be focused around a value, experience, or observation that has shaped you as a person. Many people use an abstract quality: the desire to help others, the importance of individual contribution, the drive to unite science and compassion.

Reflection

- Reflect on your academic and extracurricular experiences and how they have shaped your motivations for a career in health care.
- The influence of your family/early experiences in your life.
- Create a list of experiences that represent the evolution of your path to a career in health care.
- Identify key people (mentors, faculty, supervisors, etc.) who have inspired you.
- Think about the message you wish to convey.

Helpful Tips

- Seek to illustrate rather than merely tell your story.
- Incorporate examples from your experiences that capture your commitment to serving in health care. For example, discuss an experience:
 - a. shadowing a clinician,
 - b. volunteering at the ER, hospice center, or inpatient clinic
 - c. volunteering at the local medical, dental or vet clinic,
 - d. working as an EMT,
 - e. serving as a translator at a free clinic
- Incorporate examples of service outside the clinic, to help further illustrate your commitment to service and desire to help others.
- Incorporate examples of leadership and overcoming hardship, to demonstrate perseverance, resilience and grit.
- Be succinct in illustrating your examples.
- Create smooth yet strong transitions throughout your story

Final Items to Keep in Mind

- Watch for common writing mistakes. Use everyday vocabulary. Avoid using the word "I" except for emphasis. Make sure your verbs agree with your nouns. Avoid contractions. Do not leave too much space blank at the end.
- When you are finished, have others read your statement and critique it. Eventually, if you ask enough people, expect that the advice you receive may differ. Analyze any criticism and try to figure out why a particular item bothered the reader. Remember to pay attention if several readers question the same item. Only after your analysis, consider changing an item. Be open to suggestions, but in the end, this is your statement.



Additional Tips

Initial Review

1. State why you want to be a health professional within the first paragraph.
2. Cut the Fluff - You're only allotted:
 - 5300 characters: Medical School (MD) and Medical (DO)
 - 5000 characters: Physician Assistant, Veterinary, Nursing
 - 4500 characters: Dental, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Optometry
3. As you read through your personal statement, you can delete sentences that don't take away from the point that you are trying to make.
 - It may not be as poetic, but brevity is more important. That will give you room to expand other things you can add to the personal statement.
 - If you can read the paragraph without the sentence in question and your point is still intact - then you didn't need that sentence.

Contextual Analysis

1. Show Not Tell
 - How have your experiences impacted you, how have you felt, or why is this meaningful to you?
 - Answer the why - "Why is this important enough to bring up?"
 - Don't spend too much time setting up the story, spend more time showing why it was significant to you.
2. Evidence that you understand the values and demands of the profession
 - Showcase this by speaking more on your experience and interactions with physicians you have shadowed, volunteered with, or admired.
3. Leadership experiences
 - Showcase examples of how you have taken on responsibilities and how it has helped shape who you are; It is more about initiative than title or position held.
4. Assessment of your preparedness/readiness for medical school
 - Your closing paragraph should be rooted in this.