



Tips and Tricks for the Personal Statement


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Why Do I Need a Personal Statement?

- Exercise in self reflection
 - Opportunity to clarify thoughts/choose between specialties
 - Away Rotations (Letter of Intent)
 - Letter of recommendation writers
 - ERAS Application
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Where Do I Begin?

- Brain Dump Technique
- *“Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.”*
— Louis L'Amour
- *“The first draft of anything is s@#t.”*
— Ernest Hemingway



Self Reflection

- Pivotal Experiences
 - Life experiences or Medical School experiences
- Accomplishments
- Goals
- Values

Tell YOUR Story:

- How are you unique?
- Why did you choose this specialty?
- How are you well suited for this specialty?
- What are your future goals?



Show, Not Tell:

- Give examples
- Experience that shaped your decision
- What about you makes your journey special?

Anatomy of a Personal Statement: Beginning

- Engaging opening
- Start with describing yourself and your background
- BUT do not simply recite your CV
- Give examples to give the reader insight into your personality



Anatomy of a Personal Statement: Middle

- Clearly state your career choice
- Why did you select this specialty [or prelim year]?
- Why do you think you will excel in this specialty?
- Show – Don't tell
 - Cite examples: personal, family, professional

Anatomy of a Personal Statement: End


- Goals and expectations for your career
 - What you expect to achieve in your career/long term goals?
 - What you are looking for in a program?
 - Why this specific program may help you reach your goals?

Anatomy of a Personal Statement:



- If you are interested in a specific area of the country, this is a good place to discuss your ties to that region
- Some specialties require a customized a Personal Statement for each program.
- Even if customized PS not required, it may help to personalize your application to a competitive program
- May need multiple versions if applying to two separate specialties, or prelim plus advanced position scenario

Do's and Don't's:

- Don't just update your Med School Application PS
 - Don't focus too much on the past, make sure to address your future goals
 - Use active, rather than passive voice
 - Minimize clichés, dictionary definitions, quotes
 - Personal Statement, NOT a creative writing assignment
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Do's and Don'ts:


- Clear and succinct
- One page max
- Get a few different opinions
 - *Advisors are great at this
- MUST be error free
 - Typos and grammar can ruin your chances!
 - Have at least 2-3 people edit your work
 - Assign the correct customized PS to correct program

The Art of the Spin:

- Can use the PS to control the narrative:
 - red flags, non traditional course or deferred graduation.
- Make sure to own your experiences and show how you have grown.
- Advisors can help to craft your approach to your specific scenario



Difference between LOI and PS?

- Letter of Intent for Away Rotations
 - Short and Sweet
 - Paragraph 1: Who you are
 - Paragraph 2: Why are you choosing to rotate in this specialty
 - Paragraph 3: Why do you want to do a rotation at this specific program?
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In Conclusion

- Just start where you are
- Brain Dump
 - Who are you? Where are you coming from?
 - Where do you want to go?
 - Why?
- *Career and Professional Advisors



“I want to go into Ortho”

- Why?
- Because I like to operate
- Why?
- Because I like to work with my hands
- Why?
- Because bones remind me of support structure, like beams of a house.



Tell this story:



Resources and Examples

- <https://www.llusmaa.org/page/examples-of-personal-statements>
- <https://www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/current-students/student-affairs/career-advising/year-4-get-residency/personal-statement>
- AAMC Careers in Medicine Site
- Advising database – ask your advisor for examples