

# Personal Statements

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## ATTEND A PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

The Pre-Professional Advisement Center offers a **personal statement workshop** that teaches students how to get started on crafting their own personal statement. The calendar for personal statement workshops can be found [HERE](#).

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Health professional school programs are looking to understand who you are and your motivation to study and become a health professional. While pre-requisite courses, standardized test scores, and experiences are valuable, explaining your motivation is what helps admission committees advocate and want to admit you.
- Don't worry about what you think health professional schools are looking for—they have already seen it all. Instead, write about you. You can focus on your background and experiences that help explain why you want to become a healthcare professional.
- The key is not to just write about the experiences themselves; instead explain why these experiences have helped you reflect and understand the profession in a way that will help you become an excellent healthcare provider.

## GETTING STARTED

- **Format:** Length depends on the program you are applying to. It varies from 5300 to 4500 characters (and this includes spaces). There is no formatting in the personal statement so plan on putting it into a program like “notepad” to see how it will appear to the admissions committee.
- **Theme:** How do your stories all tie together to explaining why you are pursuing this profession?
- **Introduction:** You don't need a formal introduction. However, be aware of cliché attention getters (e.g. “It was a dark and stormy night”).
- **Body:** You have two basic options: Tell a series of short experiences. Around 2 to 4 is usually a good number. Tell one experience, but use different aspects of that experience to show different characteristics or traits.
- **Style:** Show, don't tell. Instead of telling how much you like to help other people, show them. For example, use a story about the friendship you developed with a handicapped child who you played board games with (but make sure the focus stays on you—not on the child). This is not a résumé. Don't just talk about your daily duties at your job as a research assistant. Instead, pick a certain experience and turn it into a story. For example, if you are a TA, don't just talk about how you grade papers and teach labs. Rather, zero in on a specific incident or a challenge that you had to overcome. So what? Don't just write about your cool stories. Make sure that you explain why your stories matter or how they changed you. Ask yourself, “What will the reader learn about me from this story?” What lessons did you learn or what qualities did you develop?
- **Transitions:** Connect your stories so that the reader understands your sequencing. Some examples of transitions between paragraphs are “I continued to develop my passion as I . . .” or “Another time in my life that I had to deal with this problem was when I . . .”
- **Conclusion:** Write a 3–5 sentence conclusion considering the following: How does your theme tie into the healthcare profession? Think about it this way “Why is becoming a healthcare professional the logical next step?”

## MEET WITH THE PERSONAL STATEMENT EDITOR

The Pre-Professional Editor is available and can help with all steps of the process, from brainstorming to checking your grammar and punctuation. However, to truly use this resource, do not schedule your first appointment planning to submit your application an hour later. To schedule an appointment with our personal statement editor, click [HERE](#). We encourage you to attend a workshop before meeting with the editor.

## POLISH

- Expect to go through many drafts before getting to a final version—probably more drafts than you think. Don't get discouraged; this is part of the process.
- Your personal statement should have no glaring typos or grammatical errors.
- Friends and family members can also be resources. However, remember that personal statement advice is subjective. Everyone will have an opinion on what you should write about and those opinions may not always agree with each other. Be careful of having too many people provide you with their suggestions.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT DON'TS

- Don't be afraid to talk about yourself—this is a personal statement. Don't worry about the use of "I," and make sure that your stories are focused on yourself and not on other people.
- Don't play down your experiences. Err on the side of being too boastful. Our office can help you tone it down if it's too much.
- Don't regurgitate your résumé or summarize your life.
- Don't quote people. It usually ends up just being annoying and ineffective. Members of the admissions committee are very educated, and trying to quote others often comes off as you trying (unsuccessfully) to impress or teach.
- Don't explain bad grades or poor scores in a personal statement. Do this in an addendum.
- Don't stick in the filler line at the end that says, "And that is why I want to go to become a \_\_\_\_\_."

## THE MISSION

- Don't mention your mission just to mention your mission. It's great to talk about, but make sure that you are telling a specific story or experience. Also make sure the focus stays on you. Instead of telling a story about another person's difficult situation, talk about how seeing this changed you and helped you improve and then show how it has made a lasting impact (beyond the time on your mission).
- Admissions committees do already know quite a bit about missions. You don't need to overview that you went to bed at 10 and got up at 6 and that you didn't visit your family for two years.
- Use proselytizing, not proselyting.

## GRAMMAR & MECHANICAL TIPS

- Watch out for there/their/they're, it's/its, loose/lose, lead/led, effect/affect, you're/your, then/than.
- You only need one space after each sentence, not two.
- Avoid very, a lot, really and other forms of hyperbole. Be specific.
- Use vivid language and imagery. But be wary of approaching this as creative non-fiction. You need to show the scene but going over the top rarely works.
- Use hyphens (-) to hyphenate words and em dashes (—) when you are using a dash in place of a comma or a colon or to add emphasis.
- When possible, use strong verbs instead of excessive adverbs (e.g. instead of "walked slowly," use "trudged") or auxiliary verbs (e.g. instead of "I would work," use "I worked").
- When you have two independent clauses, use a comma after for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
- Watch out for the phrase "able to". You can eliminate that phrase altogether most of the time (e.g. "I was able to volunteer" vs. "I volunteered").