

TELLING YOUR STORY THROUGH YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT: PRE-HEALTH

Writing a personal statement may seem like a daunting task. You had little trouble completing the application, requesting letters of recommendation, etc. Now it's time to tell the programs who you are and why they should include you in next year's class. The personal statement allows you to:

- Introduce yourself to the reader
- Show your interest and preparedness (i.e. how long have I been considering this field?)
- Demonstrate your ability to write well
- Highlight what you bring to the program
- Share your personal values related to the field (i.e. what related experience do I have?)

Overwhelmed? You are not alone. The following tips will help, and you are always welcome to meet with your LSU Career Coach to start the process, help with ideas, or to review your draft!

CONTENT

Provide a word picture of yourself with one or more stories. Ask yourself:

- Does the essay say something about me as a person and future practitioner in the field
- Does it have element that will stick with the reader?
- Do the action words accurately describe me?
- Are there specific, personal examples to back up my statements and illustrate my qualities?
- If applicable, have I answered the essay questions posed in the application?

ORGANIZATION

Even the best content will be lost if the ideas are presented in a jumbled, incoherent manner.

- What is your message? Write that first.
- How will your ideas logically progress to get to that conclusion?
- Write your key sentences. These may be parts of your larger story, but should lead to the message.
- Provide a framework for your essay, with the first and last sentences referring to the same topic.
- Do the key sentences flow in a logical order? Does the entire thing make sense?
- Can you "flesh out" each of the key sentences with interesting paragraphs that complete the sentence's idea?
- Does the final essay say what you wanted in a logical and compelling way?

UNIQUENESS

Demonstrate the qualities that will make you an outstanding practitioner. Your essay should:

- Sound interesting. At this point, your essay may bore you, so ask others what they think about it.
- Read like a story that ends in a logical conclusion.
- Start with a personal anecdote that will entice readers to continue reading.
- Continue to show, by example, your finest traits.
- Avoid clichés, redundancies and \$25 words. It should sound like you!

EDIT

Poor grammar, spelling, and typographical errors can ruin your statement. Review your essay. Did you:

- Check guidelines for appropriate length?
- Use varied sentence structures? Do not start every sentence with “I”.
- Use standard punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?
- Use no exclamation points? (Except in dialogue)
- Use active, rather than the passive voice when possible? (e.g., “I found the book” vs. “The book was found by me.”)
- Write sentences no longer than about 30 words? Some should be much shorter.
- Shorten paragraphs so that the page doesn’t look like a gray wall of type?
- Avoid contractions?
- Maintain agreement between subjects and verbs?
- Use large enough type (at least 10-point?)
- Have your personal statement critiqued by several people? Ask a trusted faculty member, the LSU Olinde Career Center, the LSU Writing Center, a friend, etc.

PRE-WRITING PROMPTS

******There is no recipe for a perfect personal statement. However, here are examples of pre-writing prompts to help you brainstorm and form your personal statement content & structure.

Like any writing piece, you want your personal statement to include a thesis statement/main point that is going to drive the flow and direction of your paper. By answering the 5 questions below, a main point/theme can naturally arise.

Activity #1 - Questions to consider

1. **Why do I want to be a _____?**
2. **Why do I want a _____ education?**
3. **How will this _____ education help me fulfill my goals?**
4. **What experiences make me feel ready for the ethical, professional, and moral responsibilities of a career in medicine?**
5. **Why am I interested in “x” (i.e. LSU, Baylor, etc.) _____ program?**

Adapted from “Get Into Medical School!” and DePaul University’s Career Center “Preparing Personal Statements for Graduate Schools & Professional Programs”

****Now that you have a main point/thesis for your paper, you need to back up that claim with your experience – community involvement, internships/part-time jobs, leadership experience, what you're passionate about, etc.**

You never want to “dump” your resume into your personal statement so pick the most important things/best material to back up your main point/thesis. Here's a space to start listing what you've done in each of these areas. Then, decide what makes the most sense to include in your personal statement and how that relates to your pursuit of medicine.

Activity #2 - Skills & Qualities

Personal Accomplishments:

Community Involvement:

Academic Accomplishments:

Professional Experience/Research/Study Abroad Experience:

****Reflect on stories and experiences that illustrate you – your personality, interests, and goals. Narratives are memorable and unique/personal to you. As you incorporate stories into your statement, think about why you chose this story and how it relates to your pursuit of medicine. Once again, only include stories that make sense for **you** and your statement.**

- Adapted from "Get Into Medical School!" and DePaul University's Career Center "Preparing Personal Statements for Graduate Schools & Professional Programs"*

Structure

******This is a space to outline how you want to structure your personal statement. Many times, it can feel difficult to hit on several different topics in a short essay. Utilize this outline to make sure you are saying the things you want to. It can help to use topics like an experience, preparedness, goals, or a story. An example of an outline is shown below.

Rough Outline

1. Introduction
2. Body Paragraph Idea – Tie to Theme
3. Body Paragraph Idea – Tie to Theme
4. Body Paragraph Idea – Tie to Theme
5. Conclusion

Honed Outline

1. Introduction
 - a. Hook
 - b. Providing relevant context
 - c. Introducing theme
2. Body
 - a. Story/main idea
 - b. Communicate meaning
 - c. Associate with theme
 - d. Link to next paragraph
3. Body
 - a. Story/main idea
 - b. Communicate meaning
 - c. Associate with theme
 - d. Link to next paragraph
4. Body
 - a. Story/main idea
 - b. Communicate meaning
 - c. Associate with theme
 - d. Link to next paragraph
5. Conclusion
 - a. Wrap up
 - b. Concluding theme