

# Personal Statement Expectations

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What are the main components of a  
good personal statement?

- **Motivation**
- **Exploration**
- **Reflection**
- **Demonstration**

## What are the main components we look for in a personal statement?

Insight into yourself and the practice of medicine

- Motivation- **Why** do you want to be a doctor?
  - What is appealing to you about medicine?
  - What is your understanding of medicine?
- **How** do you know you want to be a doctor?
  - Show you are making an informed decision
- **Who** are you?
  - What characteristics do you think make a good doctor?
  - Demonstrate that you have them



## Insight: do a self-assessment Incorporate your findings into your personal statement

- How did your clinical exposure convince you that medicine was the right career for you?
- Which experiences or people have had a positive influence?
- How did you become aware that you have desirable characteristics for a doctor?
- How have your experiences shaped who you are?



## Incorporating non-medical experiences that taught you something about yourself

The study of music aids the development of both individual expression and social capacity, but it also teaches priceless principles to those invested in participating. From the pressure of performance, the leadership required in rehearsal, the responsibility of practice, the self-discipline, the commitment, and the countless trials and forms of criticism I had to overcome in order to take part in my favorite hobby each year, my character reaped the benefits.

Kayaking has taught me a lot about independence and self-reliance, as well as developing determination and a willingness to push through fear and learn something outside of my comfort zone.



## What you learned about yourself from doing research



While I have gained skills from research such as critical thinking, problem solving, professionalism and persistence that will be invaluable in any career I choose, I have decided my passions lie with clinical medicine where I have day-to-day contact with patients.

Despite the notable impact that my efforts had on this project, I was never completely satisfied with my work. I was discouraged by the lack of personal interaction. I was also disheartened by the fact that, while interesting, it would probably be years before our results ever directly impacted anyone.





## Actually writing your personal statement

- Start early (take 1-2 months)
- Be honest and passionate
- Show WHO YOU ARE in your writing
- Don't make the reader feel like the 4<sup>th</sup> person you asked to the prom
- Avoid clichés
  - “I want to be a doctor so that I can help others....”



## Don't forget what you learned in English 101 This is not the place for stream of consciousness

- Theme
- Structure
  - Develop good flow and organization
  - Tell us what you are going to tell us = topic paragraph or sentence
  - Tell us what you are telling us = use examples
  - Tell us what you told us = closure
- Grammar and spelling check; human proofread
- Be clear
- Use a reviewer (someone not close to you)



## Write a personal statement that is memorable without being melodramatic

- Help the reader picture the situation
- Tell us how you are unique
- Get to a deeper more thoughtful level



## Examples

### Primary Care

- I was able to ask questions, take notes, and learn more about the field of family medicine. This was one of my most beneficial experiences because it provided me with direct patient contact and a vision of what a career in family medicine entails. This opportunity has reinforced my interest in primary care and medicine as a whole.
- I often marvel at the breadth of knowledge that Dr. O. possesses and her ability to tap into it as she visits patients with a variety of ailments on any given day. The assortment of medical problems assessed stands in stark contrast to a specialty clinic, where the majority of issues are constrained to a particular area of the body and the physician's knowledge is less broad but more in-depth.
- What struck me most was the sheer number of unique illnesses and diagnoses a doctor encounters on a day-to-day basis. Although there are certain cases, such as sore throats and sinus infections, that are seen and treated frequently, medicine is diverse. The patients themselves are culturally and economically diverse. The illnesses, how they express themselves uniquely in each individual, and the correct treatments are diverse. The actions and reactions of patients are diverse.



## Words that leave us hanging

- Broadened my exposure- how?
- Helped me understand- what?
- Made me realize- what?
- This experience has shown me the rewards- what are they?
- There are no words to describe- yes there are!

## LEAVE US HANGING



I observed the manner in which two different physicians from the same field interacted with patients, as well as with other staff members. The contrast between rural and urban emergency medicine also provided glances into two very different worlds, despite being within the same branch of medicine.



## Examples

### Team

- It showed me the multitude of ways there are to be a physician in terms of patient interaction, interaction with others on the health care team, closeness of patient relationships, dealing with difficult situations, and many other key traits of both physician and human that I will one day have to discover and become.
- From observing how doctors treated patients, I realized how important it is for physicians to be able to work as a team as well as to think on their feet, especially when the team is unable to decide what the proper treatment should be.
- At the Free Clinic I learned clinical skills within a philosophy of patient empowerment. Working on a healthcare team taught me to be an effective mediator and to communicate my views, problem-solve, compromise, and at times stand by my values. Coordinating volunteers and working as an instructor and trainer taught me leadership, delegation, and support that is guiding but not oppressive.



## “Non-traditional” applicant

### Career change

- Do you know what you really want?
- What attracted you to your college major and/or first career?
- What’s missing from your current situation?
- Apply the skill set you’ve gained to a future in medicine
- Show that you are making an informed decision





Coaching basketball, I came to realize the player-coach relationship closely parallels that of a patient and physician. Good coaches know the skills a player needs to perform, just as a physician knows the remedy to keep a patient healthy. Coaches can tactfully guide their players through drills in order to develop these skills, as a physician coaches a patient through a treatment plan to regain health. At times, coaches and physicians may need to re-strategize and develop a different game plan to better suit their clients. In the end, coaches and physician alike invest in their players and patients—grieving their losses and celebrating their victories.

## How do I stand out?

- Meet our expectations
- Be yourself-be sincere
- Be sure you really want to be a doctor
- Demonstrate that you “get it”
- Show that you have integrated all you have learned in life
- Reveal sensibility of and sensitivity to others





## Summary

- Why are you excited about being a doctor?
- How did your clinical exposure convince you that medicine was the right career for you?
- Demonstrate what you learned about yourself from your life experiences.
- What characteristics do you have that are desirable in a physician? How did you become aware of them?

## Small group exercise



- 30 minutes in group then 10 minutes sharing with everyone
- What messages come through?
  - Who is this applicant?
  - Does the applicant demonstrate understanding of being a physician?
    - Does the applicant provide examples or evidence?
  - Does the applicant demonstrate introspection and insight?
  - Does the applicant seem caring?
- Would you interview this applicant?