

## WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Because personal statements are personal, there is no one type or style of writing that is set out as a model. That can be liberating; it can also be maddening. But while every personal statement is unique in style, its purpose is the same. Most importantly, a personal statement is authentic. Don't make the mistake of trying to guess what the committee is looking for, and don't write what you think they want to hear. ***They want to know you.***

A personal statement is your introduction to a selection committee. It determines whether you are invited to interview; and if selected as a finalist, interview questions will be based on this material. It is the heart of your application.

### A personal statement is:

- A picture. Your personal essay should produce a picture of you as a person, a student, a potential scholarship winner, and (looking into the future) a former scholarship recipient.
- An invitation. The reader must be invited to get to know you, personally. Bridge the assumed distance of strangers. Make your reader welcome.
- An indication of your priorities and judgment. What you choose to say in your statement tells the committee what your priorities are. What you say, and how you say it, is crucial.
- A story, or more precisely, your story. Everyone has a story to tell, but we are not all natural storytellers. If you are like most people, your life lacks inherent drama. This is when serious self-reflection, conversation with friends, family, and mentors, and permission to be creative come in handy.

### A personal statement is not:

- **An academic paper with you as the subject.** The papers you write for class are typically designed to interpret data, reflect research, analyze events or reading—all at some distance. We are taught to eliminate the “I” from our academic writing. In a personal statement your goal is to close the distance between you and the reader. You must engage on a different, more personal level that you have been trained to in college.
- **A resume in narrative form.** An essay that reads like a resume of accomplishments and goals tells the reader nothing that they could not glean from the rest of the application. It reveals little about the candidate, and is a wasted opportunity.
- **A journal entry.** While you may draw on experiences or observations captured in your personal journal, your essay should not read like a diary. Share what is relevant, using these experiences to give a helpful context for your story. And include only what you are comfortable sharing—be prepared to discuss at an interview what you include.
- **A plea of justification for the scholarship.** This is not an invitation to “make your case.” Defending an assertion that you are more deserving of the scholarship than other candidates is a wasted effort—you've likely just accomplished the opposite.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT TOPICS

Here are some topics you may want to include in your personal statement. Try to select no more than 1-2 topics. Keep the statement to no more than 2 pages double-spaced 12 pt font.

- 1. Reasons for select the area of study that you wish to focus on**
  - List/explain the factors that attracted you to this specialty.
  - Why do you feel well-suited for this specialty?
  - Discuss nature of work
  - Desire to make contribution to business
  
- 2. Relevant Experience**
  - Discuss any paid or voluntary work experience that is relevant to this specialty (i.e., research)
  - Research accomplishments, publications, and/or awards
  
- 3. Skills/attributes you possess that are valued by the specialty**
  - Interpersonal
  - Intellectual
  - Perceptual, motor
  
- 4. Personal Goals**
  - Long-range career plan
  - Academic, private, etc.
  - Philanthropy
  
- 5. What are you looking for in a program?**
  - What do you want?
  - What do you have to offer?
  - What contributions can you make to the program?
  - Discuss aspects you feel are important in a program.
  
- 6. "Human interest" information**
  - Family
  - Regional/cultural background
  - Interest outside of medicine
  - Extra-curricular activities (not related to medicine), hobbies, unusual travel experience, etc.
  - Any special qualities