



Personal Statements

Presented by

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The main purpose of the Personal Statement is “to attract the attention of some selection committee member and get the author an interview.”

The Personal Statement
should answer the questions:
“Who are you and why do you
want to go into this specialty?”

The Personal Statement
should introduce the student
to the interviewers and give
topics for conversation

Personal Statement provides an opportunity to

- Highlight your strong points and abilities
 - Show that you know something about and are a good match for the specialty you have chosen
 - Tell about your values and how they were formed and expressed
 - Describe your career goals and how the residency will be a good match for you
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Suggested Outline for the Statement

- 1. Reasons for specialty selection
 - 2. Skills you possess which are valued by the specialty you are choosing
 - 3. Relevant clinical and personal experiences
 - 4. Personal interests and life experiences which exemplify your values and priorities
 - 5. Personal and practice goals
 - 6. Why you are applying to this program
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Format and Content

- No longer than 2 pages
 - Five to seven paragraphs
 - Short paragraphs
 - Vary sentence length
 - Use spell and grammar check
 - Use specific examples for statements
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Possible Approaches

- Chronologically – “I was born and raised in the eastern suburbs of Seattle...”
 - Thematically – When we walked into her room, the woman looked at us with scared eyes.”
 - Personal Story/Narrative – “It all began with a Red Flyer wagon tied to the back of a bike with training wheels.”
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The First Sentence Is Important:

- “I love old houses because they have good bones.” – PM&R
 - “As a teenager, I developed a memorization technique to quickly commit to memory long lists of facts. This method involves the visualization of objects in a vibrant mental picture.” - Radiology
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More First Sentences

- “Some people go through life without ever finding an interest about which they are truly passionate.” – Internal Medicine
 - “An obese, diabetic woman with uncontrolled hypertension sparked my interest in dermatology.” - Dermatology
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More First Sentences

- “Sometimes I think my husband wonders who I love more – him or my label maker. You see I have a bit of an obsession with organization.” – Anesthesiology
 - “I grew up in a puzzle family.” – Family Medicine
 - “I wrote my own epitaph today. It was how I decided that Internal Medicine is the career choice for me.”
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Common Themes

- Index Case Report – sharing personal experience of illness
- The Adrenaline Rush – telling a harrowing tale of derring-do
- The World Traveler Theme
- The Most Memorable Patient
- The Heartland Theme

Jon O. Nehrer, M.D.

Common Errors

- Lacking of “flow”– unfocused, confusing
 - Rehashing the CV
 - Giving excuses
 - Making negative statements
 - Relying heavily on quotations
 - Overusing the pronoun “I”
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Risky (but intriguing?) First Sentences

- “I am not a conventional MD candidate.”
 - “Most people notice that I am a little older than the average medical student. As a matter of fact, I am in my early forties and the grandmother of two beautiful girls.”
 - “Why would someone with an interest in public health and social service want to be an anesthesiologist?”
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Common Pitfalls

- Lecturing to the reader without personal reference
 - “Surgery requires the confidence to act on a decision made wisely, although a degree of uncertainty exists.”
 - Being undecided
 - “It seems as though I have been engaged in multiple “life experiments” since leaving high school.”
 - Raising a “red flag”
 - “Due to other factors in my life, the more specific details of my long term plans are still somewhat vague.”
 - Too general
 - “I am looking for a residency that offers a well-rounded education.”
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Extra Credit

- Weave your knowledge of the residency program with your goals:
 - “I am interested in training in Alaska because I believe your residency’s mission and educational focus to train physicians for rural practice will prepare me for the practice I wish to have.”
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Addressing Personal Issues

- “My wife will be integrally involved in my residency selection and will be traveling with me for all interviews. Her career interests lie in public health and medical law. Availability of educational options for her may be a factor in our residency choice. “
 - A program that will be supportive of, or at least accepting of my personal convictions is also requisite.”
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Applying to Preliminary/Transitional Year

■ What to say?

- “I am applying for a preliminary year at your program because I want to have a solid foundation in medicine before starting a physiatry program.”
 - “When I decided to pursue a career in anesthesia, I knew also that I wanted to complete my internship in a transitional year so that I will have the emergency medicine and ICU rotations required by the Anesthesiology RRC .”
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Advice to Students

- Write to be understood, not to impress
 - Don't become what you think they want – be yourself!
 - Have an unbiased friend(s) critique and proofread drafts
 - Have a faculty person in your chosen specialty critique and proofread drafts
 - Be prepared to discuss anything you write in your interview
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