

Crafting a Personal Statement

USF Division of Health Professions Advising

<http://www.cas.usf.edu/healthprofessions/>



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Preparing

Step 1: Understanding the Health Professions Personal Statement

The statement's main goal is to answer the following two questions:

- 1) **Why do you want to be a doctor (dentist, pharmacist, etc.)?**
- 2) **Why should they pick *you*, specifically?**

What the personal statement is **NOT**: chronological review of life/activities or a reiteration of the work/activities section. The work/activities section is where you can describe what you did, the personal statement is why it mattered.

Step 2: Reflect and Assess

Consider the following questions:

- Have you fully researched your intended health profession? If not, what else do you need to know? If so, how holistically competitive are you (more than simply GPA and test scores)?
- How/why did you develop an interest in medicine (dentistry, pharmacy, etc.)?
- What is your motivation for pursuing medicine (dentistry, pharmacy, etc.)? Are they mature rather than pediatric? (pediatric reasons: because I like to help people, because I am good at science)
- What experiences helped you grow in your understanding of the field? How?
- How can you display your knowledge about the profession?
- What examples can you provide about your humanistic capacity?
- What is it specifically about *medicine* (dental, pharmacy, etc.) that will allow you to serve others?
- What skills/characteristics do you embody that make you a good fit? Do they align with the [AAMC competencies](#)?
- What goals and values are important to you in the successful practice of your profession?
- How is your personality suited for this profession?
- What sets you apart from other applicants (i.e. special talents, languages, hobbies, recognition)? *Why* will these activities make you a better healthcare provider?
- Does your GPA/test score reflect your academic potential? Why or why not?
- If needed, how do you explain incompletes, withdrawals, and repeated courses? (*don't make excuses*)
- What is your vision for the future of your intended profession? How will you make a positive contribution?

Step 3: Determine your Theme

The personal statement should be YOUR story and, therefore, the theme YOU choose will be personal. There is no one "best" theme but you may wish to consider your relationships, experiences, and events as a guide. Additionally, some students may have more than one overarching theme.

Step 4: Organizing Your Statement/Telling Your Story

Now that you have your theme(s), you can begin to outline your story. Remember that all statements should have a strong opening (preferably with a hook), clear themes in the body, and a conclusion.

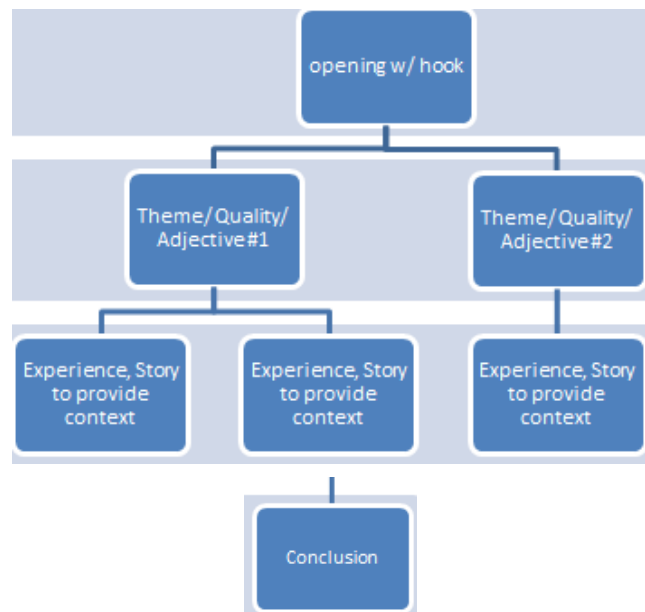
The opening should set the tone for the entire essay (written equivalent of a first impression), should be POSITIVE (no slug to butterfly stories) all while introducing the themes you will explore throughout your statement.

The body should consist of 3-5 key experiences or achievements you want to highlight that support the theme.

The conclusion should tie together the themes you introduced in your introduction with the stories/examples provided in the body of your statement.

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Make a plan BEFORE you write. One possible structure is below:



Tips:

- For each paragraph consider using the P.E.E.L. Technique. The P.E.E.L. technique is explained as such:

P	E	E	L
Point	Evidence	Explain	Link
Make your point	Back it up	Explain how	Link this point

- Generally only include recent activities when describing extra-curriculars (college and beyond).
- Avoid These** (*borrowed from John Hopkins Pre-Professional Program & Advising*): clichés, grandiosity, negativity, humor, controversial topics, arrogance, excuses, assuming the role of the victim, lies, leading with a quote from someone else (they want to know what you have to say), an “epiphany into medicine” (the decision should be the result of thoughtful decisions), and/or that you have “always known” you would be a good physician.

Writing

Step 5: Write your First Draft!

- Use active voice, use strong verbs, and vary your sentence structure.
- Avoid beginning every sentence with “I.”
- “Brevity is the soul of wit” - be concise and specific (avoid generalities).

Step 6: Review and Revise

Read your statement out loud and assess the following:

- Did you answer the essay prompt provided (if applicable)?
- What 2-3 clear qualities/characteristics (about you) would a potential admissions committee identify? Are they quality? Some possibilities: maturity, passion, logic, commitment, ability to relate to diverse cultures, compassion/empathy, genuineness, leadership, enthusiasm, self-awareness, perseverance/commitment.
- Was humanism highlighted? In the words of Dr. Specter from the Morsani College of Medicine, “Patients don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”
- Did you support the assertions you make about yourself with examples?
- How was the flow? Did you get hung up on any words, sentences?
- Did you adhere to the word limit? If not, what changes can be made to do so?

You should have multiple drafts- most quality statements have gone through at least 7 drafts over a period of many month! Hence, do not wait until the last minute! And remember, you cannot have enough proofreading!

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