

What to Keep in Mind when Writing a Personal Statement

Basics:

Focus on your academic goals – what do you hope to gain from this additional education? Make sure to address your personal goals – what will you get out of being in this field? And finally, connect to your professional goals – what do you hope to do for others/ yourself as an expert in _____ (fill in the blank)?

Make sure to connect to coursework, shadowing experiences, academic interests, and also tasks in which you are skilled and/or find personal enjoyment as they relate to your career field. This is your chance to brag about yourself in an academic way.

General Tips:

- Always read it out loud at least once in each draft to listen for errors. Sometimes we hear errors we don't see.
- Take breaks between drafts. Don't try to write it all in one go.
 - This need for breaks also means you should give yourself plenty of time to write and edit your statement more than once.
- Don't cut as you write to keep to character/word count or page length. First, write out and explain all your ideas. Then, go back and cut down with someone else's help. (see questions for cutting below)

Questions to Consider as you Cut Content to Meet Length Requirements:

- Do you use more than one word to describe something? Ex: instead of "Toyota Camry" write "car." (Look for shorter synonyms, too, if you get really stuck.)
- Do you need all of your anecdotes? Does one perhaps describe better than the rest your experiences? Knowledge-base? Coursework? Etc? Chose only one or two stories to share instead and focus on making sure they're strong, clear, and directly tied to your desire to go down this path.
- Does everything you've written directly relate in some way to your future career, personal, and/or academic goals? If not, cut it.
- Do you spend too much time explaining the future job? If so, cut that description. They know what the job is, that's why they're on the admitting/hiring committee. Instead, explain how that job relates to you specifically. Don't generalize to show you have a knowledge-base. Focus on you.
- Do you spend time answering the supplemental questions in your personal statement? If so, remove that content. You don't need to explain your commitment to diversity in your personal statement, for example, if they give you a place in the application to do so.
- Do you use the correct verb tense? This suggestion seems small but makes a large impact. For example, if you write, "I had listened to the patients." instead of "I listened to the patients" you have 4 extra characters you wouldn't otherwise. Further, if you're still doing a job/ shadowing, but you use past tense, you're likely using two additional characters you don't need: "I listened to patients." Instead should be "I listen to patients." if you're still doing that work.