

Writing A Personal Statement

(The Two-Minute Read)

- Use your personal statement to introduce yourself to your interviewer.**
 - Include topics that help the interview go smoothly.
 - Be sincere and help the interviewer know what's important to you.
 - Include only the information that you want to discuss.

- Write a focused essay, about four paragraphs in length, that covers the basics.**
 - The first paragraph should introduce the reader to you (*Who Am I?*).
 - The second paragraph should let the reader know how you arrived at your choice of the specialty.
 - The third paragraph should confirm why you think this choice is right for you, and could include such things as research, extracurricular or work experiences that are pertinent.
 - The fourth paragraph should inform the reader what you see as your long-term goals, or how you see yourself in this specialty. If your goals are not clearly defined at this point, it is worth stating that fact.

- Your goal should be to write a well-crafted statement that is both original in its presentation and grammatically correct.**
 - Since these are difficult pieces to write, if you can't be original, your second level goal is to achieve a *fresh* quality about it.
 - Articulate your personal drive in as eloquent language as you can provide.
 - The writing should flow. Include the proper use of punctuation.
 - No one expects you to be a poet or a novelist. The most important thing is to write a concise, clear statement about yourself.

- Your starting point in writing does not have to be the “Who Am I?” section.** This is the most difficult part to write. Start with the ending paragraph—that will potentially be one of the easier ones to write.

- If you explain your reasons for entering the field of medicine, do so to inform the reader of points** beyond the career choice. It's unnecessary to tell the reader “*Why I Wanted To Go Into Medicine.*” You are well on your way to becoming a physician and will be within six months of receiving your MD degree.

- If you repeat accomplishments already listed on your CV,** they should be germane to your personal/professional growth. You want the emphasis in order to encourage the reader to bring this up in the interview.

- Use your own words rather than rely on quotes; your own thoughts are more powerful.** Students have been hung up in writing personal statements because they are intent on developing the whole document around some favorite quote. If you can make it work, fine, but don't get mired down hanging onto a quote. If possible, develop a theme that carries you through the document.

- Make the statement easy to read.** The interviewers will normally have about two minutes to get through the information. Use paragraph breaks to encourage reading. One solid page of type is formidable to someone who just has a few moments to read what you wrote.

- Show your document to lots of people.** The hard work invested in this is worth it.

- Do NOT plagiarize your personal statement.** Program directors are increasingly adept at using Google to determine if the language in an applicant's personal statement comes from sources other than the applicant. It is also increasingly common for programs to receive identical personal statements from more than one applicant. This same issue also affects thank you notes. Your written work should reflect only your own effort.

- Your statement should be about one page.** Courier 10 point font with one inch margins most closely replicates how ERAS will format the statement.