

## Tips on Writing a Personal Statement

The personal statement is a way to let residency programs know personal features that are not captured in your residency application or CV, or to allow you to expand on the impact of your background and various experiences. The personal statement provides you with the opportunity to share with the reader who you are, how you got here, and where you see yourself in the future.

There are four main areas that should be covered in a personal statement:

1. *Discuss who you are: your background, interests, and motivations.* It is helpful to discuss your path to medical school, how a mentor may have influenced you, and any adversity that you overcame. Program directors also want to learn about your motivations for medicine and how you see that motivation affecting your performance in residency and in your career.
2. *Explain why you are applying to this particular specialty area.* Programs want to know about your commitment to the field to which you are applying and to learn about experiences that show why the specialty is a good fit for you. You should think about highlighting the qualities and experiences that are particularly relevant to the specialty you selected. Specific examples are particularly helpful here—some students start their statement with a patient story, including what they learned from that patient and how it affected their specialty choice.
3. *Explain any modifications you had in the medical school curriculum—leaves of absences, academic or personal challenges, etc.—and what you learned from them.* If you had any academic challenges, the personal statement gives you the chance to explain them and how you overcame these challenges. You may want to discuss this section with your coach/advisor as well.
4. *Describe your future goals and what you are looking for in a residency program.* It is helpful to a residency director to hear about any future plans you may have after residency. Do you hope to work in an academic or community setting? Do you anticipate doing a fellowship? Are there patient populations to which you are drawn? Are there specific experiences that you are looking for in residency to achieve your goals?

Other tips:

1. Think about who your audience will be. Program directors want answers to the questions above and use the statement to help them prepare for the interview. Many program directors recommend playing it safe by taking a “traditional” approach and not trying to be too creative.
2. Use real-life examples, including patient stories. These stories should highlight your growth and self-reflection, as well as the qualities you bring to your work.
3. Limit your personal statement to one page (about 700 words) using Times New Roman 12-point font.
4. Edit for grammar and readability. Program directors want to make sure that their residents pay attention to detail.
5. Have others read and provide feedback, including those who don’t know you well. You want to make sure that the document clearly explains who you are, your interests, and your professional goals. Ask your proofreaders to provide critical feedback to make the statement better.
6. Make sure that you are truthful in all of your statements and that you don’t come off as arrogant. Avoid mentioning controversial topics.