



Strategies for writing a Killer Personal Statement!

DOs

Do open with a cliffhanger

In other words, be creative with the opening sentence of your personal statement. Like a good book, draw attention with a sentence that peaks the reader's curiosity. Start with a strange or funny quote or in the middle of a story which you will eventually explain. The opening sentence sets the tone; so, make it count!

Do focus on what makes a great doctor

What makes a great doctor? Take a moment to write down 3-5 characteristics that you think a great doctor should have. This is "*the what*". This exercise will allow you to clearly articulate the values and principles that you will bring to the profession. The admissions committee wants to know what you stand for!

Do tell what would make you a great doctor

So, you've written down the characteristics of a great doctor. Share 1 or 2 experiences during which you've demonstrated those characteristics. Tell your story and make it compelling! No two stories are the same. This is what makes you unique and memorable to an admissions committee. Make them say, "Wow!"

Do highlight interesting facts and experiences

Use the personal statement to share interesting non-medical facts that don't appear in your application. Write something so unique about yourself that the admissions committee says, "Oh yeah! That was the applicant that (fill in the blank)!" You want to be an applicant they remember!

DON'Ts

Don't open like everyone else

There are over 65,000 personal statements submitted by med school applicants each year. Starting your personal statement with "I always knew I wanted to be a doctor" or some variation of that might make an admissions officer think, "Not again!" Don't give the reader an opportunity to tune out. Start out strong!

Don't focus on why you want to be a doctor

Too often, pre-meds focus on "*the why*," while admissions committees want to know "*the what*". Listing only the reasons that you want to be a doctor does not convey that you will be a great doctor. It only paints a picture of what you think it's like to be a doctor. Don't share your imagination; share your story!

Don't make a grocery list of empty adjectives

A mistake that pre-meds often make is to list adjectives about themselves without backing them up with a story. If you don't have a story that demonstrates your best characteristics, no list of adjectives will impress an admissions committee. If you write a compelling story, you won't need a list of adjectives!

Don't simply rewrite your application

Sure! There will be some overlap between the application and the personal statement, but the statement should not be used to rewrite your application in the form of an essay. You don't need to reiterate your grades, schools, and scores, unless you are clarifying some detail in the application. Just tell your story!