A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pencil, poised to write on a sheet of lined paper. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hand and the pencil. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

# **Personal Statement Workshop: The Do's and Don'ts**

**A Guide to a Successful Personal Statement**



Letter of  
Recommendation

## Your letters are a vital tool

1. Having the support of professors, physicians, research mentors, and community leaders vouching for you may be the factor that separates you from all the other applicants
2. Waiting until a couple months before you apply to get your letters in order is a RECIPE FOR DISASTER

**Letters & Evaluations from labs and online courses will not be accepted.**



# How do I ask?

## Maintain a professional attitude!

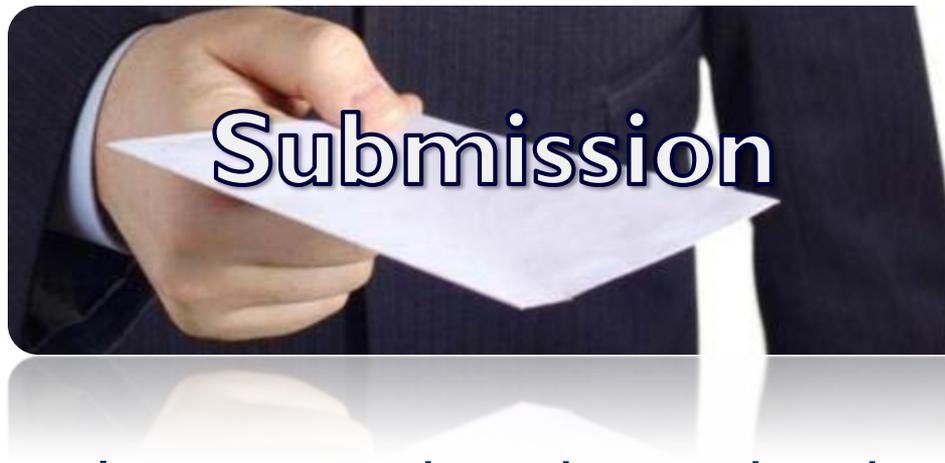
1. You should ask your professor IN PERSON if they would feel **comfortable** writing a **strong** letter of recommendation on your behalf.
2. Begin by scheduling an appointment with your prospective letter writer.
  - i. Bring with you: CV, Personal Statement, Transcript, & if necessary, Exam score (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, GRE, etc).



# How soon should I expect my letter to be done?

**Do not wait until the last minute!**

1. You should ask well in advance
2. Do NOT wait until your application is due!
3. Professors and Professionals are very busy
  1. writing letters is NOT a priority



Letters and evaluations can be submitted in the following ways

- Via interoffice mail
- US Mail
- Email (will not be accepted if student is cc'd)
- Hand Delivered to DM 331A
  - Must be in an envelope sealed with the letter writer's signature





# The Purpose

## Your statement is a vital tool

1. It provides the Admission Committee a “picture” of you
  - It is a ‘mirror’ in which they should see the ‘real’ you
2. It demonstrates YOUR unique qualifications for and commitment to the profession
3. It is your chance to “sell” yourself beyond the entrance exam & GPA numbers

**Deadline for Review: March 1!**

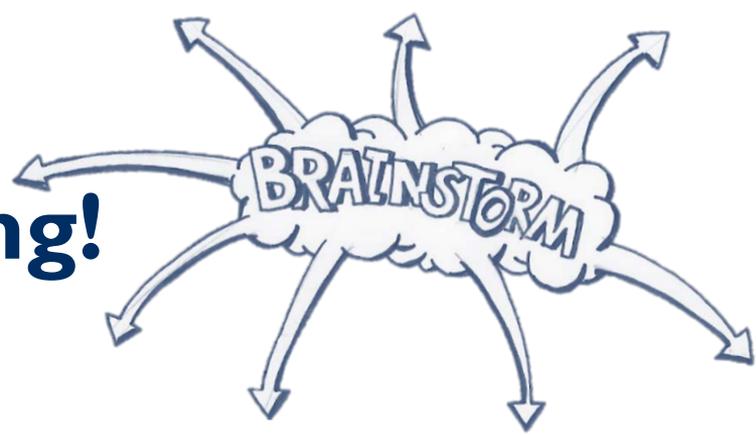


# What should be in your personal statement?

You want to show (NOT just tell) the admissions committee:

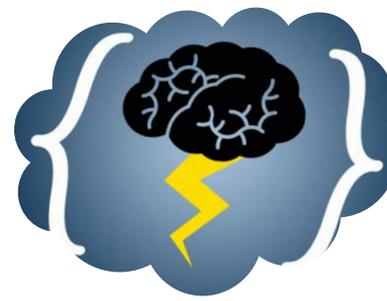
- your character
- your values
- your commitment(s)
- your industriousness
- your unique accomplishments
- your talents

# Step 1: Planning!



- Make a plan to make your story **flow**
- The more intuitive the progression of your story, the easier it is to read → vital to a successful statement!
- Create an outline with the points you want to get across
  - What makes you *different*?
  - What tells *YOUR* story?

# Brainstorm!



**SHOW** evidence of qualities that would answer the following questions for the committee:

1. Do you want to come to our Medical/Dental/Optomerty/Pharmacy/PA school?
2. If accepted, will you come **AND** work your hardest to excel?
3. How will you make us look good?

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## Think about your:

- Motivations
- Family Background
- **Significant** outstanding issues – explain/clarify
- Extracurricular Activities and Work/Volunteer Experience
- Future Plans (long/short term)

# The BIG “Don’t”

- **DO NOT just list your qualities, SHOW them!**
  - The natural reaction to a list is to question your statement
  - A list of your qualities will sound pretentious even if it is accurate
- **Instead of a list, give an example:**
  - Give an anecdote of how you have showed integrity or resolved a challenging problem or situation

# This is **NOT** a resume!

- All central applications are extensive, your readers already know your experiences!
- You may choose to expand on SIGNIFICANT experiences you've listed, but ***choose these wisely***
  - You want to avoid sounding repetitive
- Remember to avoid lists, tell the reader something about you that includes that quality you want to emphasize
  - Make every character count!



# Make this your OWN

- You can read many personal statements online but none will be about YOU and YOUR story
- **Your personal statement isn't a recipe!! There isn't a template – you should see yourself as unique**
  - A recipe or template will limit your creativity
  - Remember: there are no set “rules” for these essays

# Remember, this is a **PERSONAL** statement!

- When written correctly, personal experiences can add uniqueness to your statement without making you pitiable or a victim
- Caveats:
  - Be optimistic – how has adversity changed you?
  - Focus on what you learned or how you grew from an experience
  - This is all about you, so *keep the focus on YOU!*

# 'Full Circle'



- An essay must have a solid start and this is often a theme that runs throughout the essay
- Usually the thematic topic is revisited and emphasized in the concluding paragraph to bring the essay 'full circle'
- After you have written a first draft you may find it helpful to re-outline and re-organize

# Almost Done!

Loading 76%

1. Revise, revise, revise!
  - Eliminate as many useless filler words as possible to have space for the important words (e.g. very, however, ‘colorful’ adjectives)
2. Carefully check spelling, punctuation, grammar
3. Make an effort to be interesting through the good use of language
  - **Avoid** use of flowery or over-descriptive writing



# Revising

1. Have your friends read it, carefully and critically
2. Give it to the faculty members you know well
3. Visit the Writing Center for constructive comments
4. When you believe it is **Finished** bring to the Office of Pre-health Professions Advising

\*Do NOT bring something with errors in grammar, spelling or a preliminary draft!

# Common Weaknesses

- ❌ Too many points, may lack detail and specifics
- ❌ Listing of activities or qualities
- ❌ Criticism of others, judgmental
- ❌ Controversial topics, a personal agenda
- ❌ **Excessive vocabulary, verbose, complex words**
- ❌ Generic statements and platitudes
- ❌ Rambling and excessive writing, off-topic descriptions


# Writing a Personal Statement



## Shadowing Example:

Anyone can shadow! BUT what did YOU learn or observe while shadowing?

How does your shadowing experience make you a better candidate for medical school?

## Bad Example:

Being interested in the medical field led me to shadow Dr. Sixon at his private practice. I was able to see many different procedures being performed. It was great to see the difference that Dr. Sixon could make in the patients' lives. For instance, when he was able to identify appendicitis on a young patient. I saw how everyday at his office was different and that attracted me even more to the medical field.



# Writing a Personal Statement

Your PS should convey your personal qualities while telling the story!

## Good Example:

To broaden my clinical experience I shadowed Dr. Sixon at his practice located in the inner city of Miami. Most of the patients that were seen were **low-income African Americans and Hispanics**. Being **bilingual**, I helped by **translating** for the Spanish-speaking patients and through my involvement I noted the significance of making **patients feel comfortable by being understanding and listening attentively**. In one instance, I saw Dr. Sixon deal with a **non-compliant patient**. As he tailored the treatment plan to fit the patient's requests and **religious beliefs** I learned the **importance of being respectful of other's views** and the emphasis he placed on **patient centered care**.

Exposed to different patient populations

Understands the importance of the physician-patient relationship

Seems to possess cultural competency necessary for career

Fluent in another language, comfortable translating

Aware of barriers to providing healthcare



**Don't let it wait, we won't have time to  
read it after March 1!**

Contact us!

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