Personal Statements

Use your personal statement to introduce yourself to the program director. **Consider your audience**: busy people who want to know about **your goals and motivations** to help them decide if they should interview you. At the end of the essay, the reader should have a portrait of who you are in relationship to your medical career choice.

The personal statement is only one part of the application and generally not the first document the residency director will look for in the packet. It probably won't get you an interview but it could keep you from getting an interview. **Err on the side of safe and vanilla**.

The residency director wants to know:

Why you are interested in the field?

What you are looking for in a residency program?

What your professional goals in the field?

What personal attributes will make you a good fit to the specialty or residency program? Use examples that exemplify these attributes.

Help the reader to understand that you are hard-working, inquisitive, persistent, and dedicated to your specialty choice without coming out and saying "I am hard-working and committed to this specialty."

Paragraph 1   **Who you are & what is your specialty choice**

Make it personal: discuss what you like about the specialty, what interests you, what makes the field rewarding and why. Think about the qualities that drew you to this specialty. If it's ortho, it might be your love of working with your hands and the enjoyment you glean from seeing immediate results. If it's family medicine, it might be the opportunity to see people across their life span or your commitment to prevention.

Paragraph 2   **How you arrived at your specialty choice**

Give specific examples of experiences that inform your career choice or demonstrate your skills (avoid clichés and generalities). It is much less effective to make abstract statements, such as, "I like continuity of care" than to describe an experience that illuminates this interest.

Paragraph 3   **Confirm your specialty choice**

Can include such things as pertinent research, extracurricular or clinical experiences. Highlight what you've learned from your experiences and how those experiences influenced you. Draw personal conclusions from your experiences – show your ability to reflect on an experience with professional maturity

Paragraph 4   **Professional aspirations** (long term goals, how you see yourself in the specialty).

If you're goals are not clearly defined, it's perfectly OK to state that.

Often the easiest paragraph to write – you might start here

Focus on your growth during the clinical years of medical school, especially as it pertains to your chosen field.

The writing should have **logical flow** from one thought to the next. Include transitions between sentences and paragraphs.

Create a **strong structure** with each paragraph focused on a central idea.

Check and recheck for typos and for incorrect grammar or punctuation.

Be **concise, clear and direct.** This is not the time to showcase your creative writing skills. Do not use clichés, tired analogies or metaphors.

Make the statement **easy to read**. Use paragraph breaks to encourage reading.

Begin and end the statement in a **strong, positive and engaging** manner.

A statement should **emit confidence and self-worth**, not arrogance.

Your tone of voice should be **personable yet professional**.

If you feel you need to discuss serious **weaknesses** in your application, **seek advice from student affairs** and handle them **carefully, quickly and positively**.

Stay away from financial and lifestyle reasons for choosing a specialty.

Give yourself plenty of **time to write and revise** your personal statement and allow time for **others to review** your statement. Your career advisor and MSPE writer are good people to have review your personal statement.

ERAS allows you to **direct different statements to different programs**. It's fine to have one statement tailored to academic programs and another statement for community programs.

> **Length?**
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> No more than a page.
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> Surgical field…keep it short and to the point