

The Writing Center @ KUMC

Dykes Library G011 • www.kumc.edu/writing • writing@kumc.edu • 913-945-8477

The Personal Statement for Medical Residency

You've almost finished your degree, and now your thoughts turn to the next step: **residency**. Perhaps you know where you want to be, perhaps not. Wherever you apply, to be a resident you first need to write a personal statement. Depending on your specialty, reviewers will look for specific attributes they believe are important for professionals in their field. For surgical residency, reviewers look for the best and brightest; family medicine reviewers want mature individuals comfortable with gray areas; reviewers in internal medicine focus on applicants with a strong interest in internal medicine.

Regardless of specialty, however, all reviewers look for applicants who present their professional selves in personal terms. To accomplish this fusion, here are some aspects to consider:

Content of Your Personal Statement

- **The introduction:** Establish why you became interested in medicine. Some have personal situations that led to an interest in medicine, such as a family member's illness or injury, but others don't. If you don't have a personal event, what led you to enter medicine and choose your specialty? Reviewers want to see you as a person to better assess you as a professional.
- **Area of specialty:** This is the part in which to discuss your educational background, rotation experiences, and development of a specific interest in a specialty. Do you want to do clinical work or research? Do you want to mentor and teach?
- **Support with evidence:** If you have any clinical, professional or personal experiences, extracurricular activities, or volunteer work (to name just a few options) that reflect skills, personal attributes, and experiences useful to your specialty, include these in your personal statement. Detailed accounts of these experiences will PROVE that you have the skills you say you do.
- **Conclusion:** Use this section to describe your specialty. Discuss what you hope to gain from residency and reiterate what personal attributes and skills you bring to the program. Look ahead to the future. What professional life do you envision for yourself after residency? What kind of residency program will help you get there?

Before Writing Your Personal Statement

- **Brainstorm.** Reflect on why you went into medicine and your reasons for choosing your specialty, such as hands-on experiences. Think about your aptitudes, "soft" skills (collaboration and communication), and long-term goals. Use writing as a way to discover and reflect at this stage.
- **Dialogue.** Have conversations with peers or professionals about their personal statements. Listening to others can inspire you to see multiple options.
- **Create a timeframe.** Make time to work on your personal statement rather than waiting for an optimal time that may never materialize. With your tasks set out on a timeline, you can manage your progress effectively. Try to write every working day, even if it's for just 10 minutes.
- **Visit the writing center.** Writing tutors are especially helpful in the early stages of your statement. We can help you brainstorm, plan, and make the writing process less daunting. We are happy to help at every stage, though!

Writing Your Personal Statement

- **You don't have to start with the introduction.** Beginnings are difficult. Instead, you might find writing about the experiences that led to your chosen specialty an easier place to start.

- **When you begin to write, don't worry about length.** The important thing is to get what you want to say on paper. You can revise and refine your statement later.
- **Find a focus.** What are the main points you want to make? Try rereading all the brainstorming you've done to find patterns of words or ideas. Identifying these themes will help you build an overarching narrative and outline for your statement.
- **Make sure your personal statement has a framework.** The three or four sections should flow together, tying your experiences, education, and skills into a personal narrative that will convey your suitability for your specialty. Continually ask yourself – what is the main message I want readers to take away from reading this? Does each paragraph contribute to that message?

Editing your personal statement

- **Start with large-scale edits.** When editing, it is best to start with the big ideas. Make sure you are satisfied with the content and structure before worrying about smaller details. Communicating your interests, skills, and unique experiences is more important than grammar.
- **Then move to smaller-scale edits.** Once you feel confident in your structure and content choice, then you can focus on sentence-level revisions. Reading out loud at this stage is a great way to identify awkward phrasing, incomplete sentences or thoughts, and repeated words or ideas.
- **Share your writing as often as possible.** One of the best ways to know how your audience will react to your statement is by having a variety of audiences read your work. Start with safer audiences, like a friend, family member, or the writing center. Then, move up to audiences with more expertise/insider's knowledge, such as a mentor or program director in your specialty.

*These are suggestions, not ironclad rules. But whatever you choose to include in your personal statement, **remember to use clear, direct language.** Write of the actual, not the theoretical. Be genuine to your own experiences, don't write what you think they want to hear.