

The Personal Statement (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: 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, why did you go into medicine? 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?
- If you have any personal interests, extracurricular activities, and/or you've done any volunteer work that reflects skills, personal attributes, and experiences useful to your specialty, include this in your personal statement.
- 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?

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.
- Dialogue with peers or professionals about their PS. 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.

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?
- 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.

*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.

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