

# PERSONAL STATEMENT

Sharing your reasons for pursuing a healthcare career

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

## WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

Most applications to health professional programs will require a written personal statement. Though exact prompts will vary depending on the application, your personal statement is often your first opportunity to share your specific reasons for pursuing a career in a healthcare path with an admissions committee.

## WHY IS THE PERSONAL STATEMENT IMPORTANT?

A personal statement is an opportunity for you to support or enhance other parts of your application. It is your first chance to help the admissions committee understand your motivation for pursuing your chosen career path, while giving them a sense of who you are. The personal statement tells your story and the context that shaped who you are as a person – your values, interests, and goals. Your statement should elevate your application and make the admission committee feel something.

## THEMES TO AVOID IN YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT:

- **Clichés:** “I like science and want to help people.” – This is a job requirement, not something that makes you stand out.
- **Epiphany/Manifest Destiny:** Your pursuit of the health professions should be the result of a series of thoughtful, conscious, and reflective decisions, not an instantaneous realization or something you’ve “always known”.
- **The Narrative Resume:** Do not rehash all your activities and achievements. Your statement should focus on one or two significant experiences that offer insight into your decision
- **Grandiosity:** While it is good to have goals, general claims that you are going to “cure cancer” or “eliminate healthcare disparities” shows a lack of understanding of the problem you are hoping to solve.
- **Excuses:** There are better uses for your personal statement than justifying poor grades, conduct violations, etc. However, if you choose to address this, make it brief and focus on what you learned from the incident. TMSAS provides an optional essay that may be used to address any issues.
- **Name Dropping:** Your experiences are what make you unique, not who you know. Keep the focus on you.
- **Inflammatory/Controversial Remarks:** You do not know the values, beliefs, and background of the person who is reading your essay. Refrain from making strong statements on politics, religion, and other polarizing topics.
- **Lies:** This not only includes blatant lies, but also includes providing information that may be factually accurate but is presented in a misleading way. It will not take an admission committee long to figure out when you are embellishing.
- **Quotations:** You have around 5,000 characters for your personal statement. Do not waste them using someone else’s words.
- **Unusual Format:** Do not try to stand out by using an unusual format. Do not submit artwork, videos, or poems. Also, it is recommended you avoid the use of bullet-points, symbols, and bold/italics.
- **Experience providing any treatments you are not licensed to provide:** If you have ever participated in treatments while shadowing or volunteering (especially abroad) do not discuss this experience unless you are licensed. Please see the [AAMC’s](#) and [ADEA’s](#) policies regarding these experiences.

## **STEPS FOR WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT:**

### ***Step 1: Reflect***

Take a moment to assess why you want to join your chosen profession. Use the following questions to help guide your thoughts and write down your reflections:

- **Motivation:**
  - Why are you applying?
  - What inspires you to pursue this profession?
  - What makes you so passionate about this?
- **Fit:**
  - What are your values?
  - How do these align with the values of the profession?
  - What personal qualities do you have that will enable you to positively contribute to the profession?
- **Capacity:**
  - What are your most defining experiences?
  - What competencies did you develop/demonstrate through these experiences?
  - What errors or regrets have taught you something about yourself?
  - How have you changed/grown from your experiences?
- **Vision:**
  - What do you want to do and be?
  - What impact do you want to have?

### ***Step 2: Brainstorm***

Start thinking about what you want your central message to be. Review the Personal Statement prompt. Using your notes from your reflection, start grouping like thoughts and look for an emerging theme. Remember, this is YOUR personal statement. Think about the aspect of yourself you want to convey to the admissions committee.

#### **Possible Topics:**

- Explain your clinical experience and what you have learned about the patient-provider relationship.
- A diverse/unique experience or event and how it shaped you.
- A leadership role you played and how it challenged you.
- Athletes: How have you been molded your discipline and teamwork responsibilities?
- Study Abroad: How has your appreciation for diversity and gaining a global perspective shaped your outlook?
- Artists/Musicians: How has your focus/discipline/creativity contributed to your interest in healthcare?
- Volunteers: How can you apply your compassion, altruism, and dedication of time/energy to medicine?

### ***Step 3: Execution***

Once you have a well-developed thesis statement, start writing! At this point, focus on your message and save editing for later. You should open with a hook and conclude by reinforcing your thesis. It is helpful to use an essay outline to make sure your statement stays on point and paragraph outlines to keep structure within the paragraph and help with flow.

#### **Essay Outline:**

- Introduction (Motivation)
- Initial inspiration, provides context
- Body (Fit and Capacity)
- Action/Experiences
- Change
- Insight into change/growth

#### **Paragraph Outline:**

- Point (Introduction to the main point of the paragraph)
- Evidence
- Explanation of how/why it is relevant to the profession
- Link (Transition to next paragraph)
- Conclusion (Vision)
- Future goals

### ***Step 4: Editing and Proofing***

- Read over your essay and analyze it line by line (consider reading aloud). As you are reading, ask yourself if this essay could apply to any other profession. If so, it is not specific enough.
- Identify trusted proofreaders. Could they guess the prompt after reading your statement? Ask them to articulate your central message. If they interpreted it differently than you intended, you may not have been clear enough. Be open to their suggestions, but make sure the statement still has your sentiment.
- We strongly encourage you to utilize the [University of Houston Writing Center](#) for additional assistance.