

WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

ORGANIZATION of Essay

Questions to ask: By jotting down answers to the following questions, you will come up with a bare bones outline of your essay. This outline will help you assess the effectiveness of the essay's organization and development and thus help you to prepare to revise your draft.

1. Is there a main idea or focus that prepares for and unifies the main ideas of the paragraphs that follow? If so, what is it and where have you placed it? (*Usually it should be the first paragraph.*)
2. What is the main point of each paragraph? How does that point connect to the overarching theme or focus of the essay as a whole and to the main points of the other paragraphs?
3. How do the paragraphs of the essay progress? Possible ways of organizing such essays include the following: chronological development of your character or interests, a theme related to your qualifications, types of activities or influences (*such as home life, education, extracurricular, volunteer, work*), types of qualifications you possess.
4. What support of development of each paragraph's main point is provided? (*Indent supporting points under the point they support to give you a visual representation of the hierarchy of ideas.*) Are there any points which would benefit from more detailed development or examples that would benefit from further explanation of why and how they are important or influential? (*Looking at the number and type of points/examples listed in the outline for each paragraph should help you decide what needs further development.*)
5. Are there any portions of any paragraph that don't fit clearly with the paragraph's main focus?

A Sample Outline:

Essay's order: Types of influences that nurtured qualities associated with being a successful doctor (the influences ordered chronologically from earliest to most personal to most recent & impersonal)

Paragraph 1

Thesis: Several factors have contributed to my decision to become a physician. Throughout my life, I have been given opportunities to assume responsibility, develop, discipline, help others and pursue goals.

Development: My parents have been very influential in my progression in all of these areas:
Farm work, both independent and collective
Small town life builds awareness of others' needs (*connection with parents' influence?*)
Parents instill importance of helping others

High school athletics beneficial to developing discipline (*connection with parents' influence?*)

Parents gave unlimited encouragement

Paragraph 2

Educational interests

Throughout high school, strong interest in science

This interest increased in college with premed curriculum

Below average grades in organic chemistry; therefore intend to retake

Paragraph 3

Broader perspective on other areas of study gained as well

Participant in Psych Dept. research

Expanded knowledge of humanities with course in Music, Lit, and Soc

Paragraph 4

Additional factors reinforcing decision to be a physician

Exposure to several aspects of patient care and interaction

Volunteer in VA Medical Pharmacy

EMT for local fire department

Most challenging and rewarding experiences of life

Paragraph 5

One of the strongest motivations is awareness of the need for physicians in my hometown

Definite need to establish practices there and sustain commitment

I plan to return to this area to serve the community

Sample Outline #2

Essay's Order: Chronological development of qualities typical of successful physician and development of interest in the profession

Paragraph 1

The medical profession combines knowledge and wisdom from every aspect of life which is directed towards helping humanity (*is this too sweeping a statement?*)

Physician is leader of health care team, practices broadly and acquires specialty of own choosing (*Is this the leadership role the ideal one to cite?*)

Thus, medicine offers challenges and fulfillment I am seeking

Paragraph 2

Growing up on farm instilled responsibility

Ex: started driving tractors at 5 years old (*a bit young to be advisable?*)

In high school, member of Future Farmers of America and farmed own plot of land

Before most people getting first job, I took on great responsibility (*self-serving comparison?*)

Consequences: experience with rural people, mechanical technologies, & manipulative skills

Paragraph 3

In high school, first seriously considered becoming a physician

Physician talked on good and bad aspects of being doctor

Pharmacist talked on his profession

I decided the best possible preparation for medicine would be pharmacy. (*Is this believable?*)

Hard going through pharmacy school knowing ultimate goal was to be physician

Learned to process and master large quantities of material

In last year of pharmacy school with clinical rotations, I knew being a physician would be greatest desire

Made rounds with med students

Spent hours one-to-one with patients

Searched for new therapies for one patient's illness

I was encouraged by med students that I would make a good doctor (*unproductive focus on self?*)

Paragraph 4

During undergraduate education, I worked as EMTA for local ambulance services (*break with chronological development?*)

Great opportunity to interact with many people

I really enjoyed the work (*more focus on those helped?*)

Paragraph 5

After graduation, I decided to work to pay the bills and see if I could be satisfied with pharmacy

Knew there was not enough patient contact

I wanted to learn about non-drug therapies and diagnosis as well

Sample Outline #3

Essay's Order: Chronological tracing of the writer's desire to become physician from birth to maturity, with emphasis on this desire as balanced by a realistic awareness of the rigorous demands of the profession

Paragraph 1

Born with affinity for medicine (*cliché? Believable?*) Early in medicine

Excelling in grammar school was direct result of early commitment to learn

Though financially disadvantaged, hard work & determination made college possible

Years at school enriched by competitiveness & drive for excellence of peers

I needed to work harder to compete with individuals with better high school educations

Paragraph 2

Early interest strengthened by two factors

1st: deep concern and compassion for people

Ex: two tutoring experiences

Through helping others, I gained satisfaction

2nd: love of science reinforced interest on medicine – intrigue and intellectual stimulation

Fascination always leaves me with thirst for knowledge (*cliché?*)

Paragraph 3

Through spending time with cousin, realize becoming a doctor is demanding

It requires decision-making, competency, motivation, extreme dedication, compassion, & life-long learning

Exposure to applied health care assured me I made the right choice

Volunteer work at local hospital was rewarding experience

Duties included: treating minor ailments, taking blood pressure.

Paragraph 4

After birth daughter, thought best to spend developmental years with her

After returning to school, aimed to strengthen my science academic background (*does this raise unanswered questions?*)

Paragraph 5

I am aware of the need for physicians in medically underserved areas

People in these areas have had to suffer the effect of living where there are insufficient medical personnel

My hope is to work toward betterment of society through delivery of quality health care