



Personal Statements for Residency

Rationale

A personal statement presents the admissions committee with an interesting and comprehensive picture of the applicant. Specifically, it allows the committee to learn about the applicant beyond what the resume/CV/transcript conveys and determine if the applicant is a good match for the residency program. Often, the personal statement is the only writing sample submitted during the application process and thus the only chance for applicants to both demonstrate their writing skills and humanize themselves.

Organization

Many schools or programs will provide a prompt or ask specific questions; applicants should first check for any prompts or length restrictions before writing. These guidelines often define the scope and determine the organization of information committees want.

The outline below assumes a general personal statement prompt:

Write a personal statement discussing your interest in the field, your career goals, and why you want to be in this program.

Introduction: Your introduction should grab the readers' interest, develop a theme, and present the organization of the essay in the form of a forecast statement.

1. Lead-in/Hook:

Don't necessarily begin with The Beginning; instead, hook your readers with an attention-grabbing and/or unexpected first sentence that hints at an eventual theme. Avoid starting with something cliché that many others will write (e.g., "I want to be a doctor in order to help people.").

If the committee/prompt requests a personal statement focusing on research activities, this statement should be less of an attention-grabbing hook and more functional.

2. Develop a theme:

Ideally, you should develop a thematic idea you can return to throughout the essay that brings otherwise separate or unrelated ideas together in a cohesive way.

3. Forecast Statement:

Conclude the introduction by providing a forecast statement. Remember that readers are busy and may not read the entire essay. The forecast statement previews what is coming and the order it is coming in, thus making the entire statement easier and quicker to read.



Body: The body of the essay might cover a number of different topics—topics are largely dictated by the field you are in and the prompt you are given. For instance, if you are in a research-oriented field, you will want to spend time discussing your past, current and future research. In contrast, professional fields may ask for a teaching philosophy, professional development or specific character traits/personality traits related to success in that field.

Common Paragraph Topics (note: this does not mean you should have 6 body paragraphs; rather, these are examples of ideas you may want to discuss in your personal statement):

1. *The Inception of Your Interest:* indicate where your interest in the field began, whether it was as a child or in grad school. Discuss the point in time when you realized a particular interest or research focus as your impetus to pursue a specific focus or specialty.
2. *Particular Abilities/Experiences that Demonstrate Success:* focus on demonstrating your proven ability to succeed. Specifically, you want to illustrate your potential to excel in your field and your ability to complete valuable research or other appropriate activities. Do not simply state that you will be successful; think about which of your skills helps you to stand out as a candidate. Select specific examples that illustrate your skills and qualifications for the program. Instead, demonstrate your ability through previous experience using CSARR:

C.S.A.R.R. – Claim, Situation, Action, Result 1, Result 2

In order to truly demonstrate your ability to succeed, make a Claim about a specific quality you have, provide examples of past success by describing a Situation you were in, the Action(s) you took, and the favorable, local Result 1. Ideally, your Result 1 will be quantifiable or measurable. Finally, connect your experience to the program or your future goals with a more global Result 2.

3. *Program Focus:* mention your future research interests or a particular area of focus that aligns with the program. Residencies are often selective and competitive; if possible, tailor your statement to the program; doing so will demonstrate that you're familiar with their goals and values and what they have to offer. Identify how your research interests fit into a specific department or, if relevant, mention any scholars or doctors you want to work with.
4. *Personal Qualities:* elaborate on specific qualities you possess that will help to advance your success. Avoid making unsubstantiated claims; instead, use CSARR to show specific qualities in action that resulted in success.



5. *Career Goals*: indicate what you intend to do after your residency. Provide a specific career goal, research area, specialty, etc., and indicate how this program will help you to achieve your goal. Prove that you have thought about how you will use this degree/training.
6. *Conclusion*: Your conclusion should end the statement by connecting back to any themes you developed in the beginning, making a final appeal as to your potential for success and concluding with a statement that indicates your desire to be a part of that particular program. Think of your conclusion as bookending your introduction.

Tone

There are no hard-and-fast rules regarding exactly what each committee is looking for. Each person on the committee probably has particular qualities, pet peeves, and desires in mind. It is nearly impossible to ensure that you are going to please everyone with your personal statement. Instead, do your best to communicate effectively and concisely while maintaining a personable but professional tone:

- Never make excuses. While you may feel the need to explain a bad grade or test score, you should only do it in a way that shows your ability to overcome adversity and/or proves that it was a situation that happened in the past that will never happen again.
- Be confident but not over-confident. You don't want to brag, but you do need to give yourself credit for your accomplishments.
- Go for quality over quantity. Just because your statement can be two pages long does not mean that it has to be. If you can get your point across in fewer words, do so.

Final Tips

Remember that ultimately the personal statement is an argument. To that end, committee members are looking to be convinced of a few things:

- You have a passion for the program you're applying for
- You have the ability to be successful in the program
- You will be an asset to their program, not a liability