

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

COURTESY OF THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT FORUM. I USED THIS WHILE DRAFTING MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF MY PS. IT'S ALSO HELPFUL WHEN YOU'RE REVISING!

PERSONAL STATEMENT HELPFUL HINTS:

- Engage the reader and create interest.
- Get to the point. There is a character limit for personal statements. One page is usually all it takes to make your point.
- Avoid using flowery language and/or big words throughout your statement.
- Make sure the statement is structured in a logical order and flows nicely so it is easy to read.
- Do not restate your resume.
- Incorporate how your healthcare experience and non-healthcare experience (academics, volunteer, and leadership positions) prepared you for PA school.
- Be insightful and analytical about your understanding of the role of the PA. Use your clinical experiences to draw this conclusion.
- Call out the elephant in the room. If you had a “hiccup” in your academic career, you should BRIEFLY address it (i.e. death in the family, immaturity factor, poor study habits), state what you did to overcome it, and what you have done to sustain an upward trend in your academic performance.
- If you have a strong desire to enter a certain field of medicine, explain why. For example, if you want to go into primary care, what have you done to prepare yourself for this field (i.e. clinical experience opportunities, skill sets, are you from a disadvantaged background, etc.), and the challenges PAs face, if any in the particular field.
- Have more than one person review your statement. An advisor, career services representative, or a writing center are good resources to utilize.
- Avoid contractions.
- Avoid acronyms that the common person would not know (this is especially true for military applicants).

QUALITIES TO PORTRAY:

- Maturity
- Reflectiveness
- Honesty and integrity
- Clarity of thought
- Passion
- Individuality
- Positivity
- Logic
- Distinctiveness
- Commitment
- Ability to relate to diverse people
- Insight into the chosen health profession
- Compassion and empathy
- Genuineness and sincerity
- Leadership
- Insightfulness
- A realistic perspective
- Lessons learned
- Self-awareness

THEMES TO AVOID:

- Clichés: Avoid starting a statement with a famous quote or with cliché' filler statements like:
"I want to be a PA because I like science and I want to help people..."
"Ever since I was five I played with my mom/dad's doctor's kit.."
"I loved to play the game Operation as a child and that sparked my desire to be a PA..."
"As I watched my beloved family member pass away, I knew then I wanted to be a PA..."
- Restating your resume': We have already read the majority of your application up to this point, so do not retell your life story again.
- Story Time: Limit your personal stories about a patient or incident in the clinic to ONE no more than TWO. The statement should focus more the topics mentioned above.
- The "epiphany into medicine": Your pursuit of the PA profession should be based on your adult experiences up until this point, NOT an instantaneous realization.
- Manifest Destiny: You have not always known you want to be a PA and the fact that someone tells you "you'll make a great PA one day" does not justify why you should be a PA.
- Grandiosity: Claiming that you plan to eliminate all the healthcare problems in an area is not realistic and shows a grave lack of understanding of the profession.
- The "humble brag": Of course you're special, but claiming "you probably do not see many applicants like me" is not only arrogant, but is likely untrue. We've seen it all.
- Remember your audience: Remember people do have other biases and views that may not agree with yours so avoid controversial topics and statements that could offend someone. Also, remember the admissions committee can be made up of all types of members of the healthcare team. Avoid statements like "I want to be a PA because PAs spend more time with their patients in comparison to physicians." These types of situations are not always true and you do not want to stereotype an entire profession when you've only been around .00000001% of them.
- "I am a victim": Victims are never attractive applicants and any difficulties along the way should be dispassionately addressed. These explanations should be brief and also address what you have done to overcome the situation and what you learned from it.
- Excuses: Never, ever blame anyone else for difficulties in your life or academic career.

REMEMBER:

- Show, don't tell. Don't tell me you're great at multitasking. Show me! Describe it instead: "Despite having to care for my ailing mother at home, work the graveyard shift at the hospital, and help victims of abuse at the women's shelter, I still managed to keep my by grades by merely studying instead of sleeping."
- What makes the PA profession personally meaningful to you. Do not reiterate catch phrases like autonomy, flexibility, and all those other words that you can find on countless websites/blogs. Do mention personal things you've seen! Like the time you shadowed a PA talking to a family who was strapped for cash, and the PA was sensitive and attentive enough to notice the dilemma and was kind enough to provide their family with ample samples. Again, show, don't tell.
- Overall, a great personal statement can be achieved by getting the reader think - yes. I want to meet the person who wrote this!