

Writing Your Medical School Application Essay

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The “Rules” for AMCAS

- Note: these are specific for AMCAS but apply generally to other application essays
- 5300 characters including spaces, ~ one page
- There is no spell check in AMCAS!
- There is no formatting, use text only program
- For MD/PhD – there are 2 additional essays
 - Why an MD/PhD? 3000 characters
 - Research Experience – 10,000 characters

Answer this question

- Why do you want to be a doctor?
- Which really means: How do you know that you want to be a doctor?
- Which really, really means: What have you done to verify that you want to be a doctor and what do you think of that?

Most of you want to be a doctor to:

- Help people
- Or because you like science
- Or because you like social sciences

Many of you have...

- Wanted to be a doctor since you were young
- Have volunteered in a medical setting
- Have been involved in research

So how are *you* different?

- You are different because of the way that you've experienced, reflected upon, and examined your choice to be a doctor.
- Your personal interpretation of what a life as a doctor holds and what it means to you.
- This is your chance to communicate that to medical schools.

How do you convey your message?

- You want to be telling your personal story.
- Stories can capture someone's attention and provide an intimate connection.
- Real experiences provide grounding for your motivations – “show” don't “tell”
- Focus primarily on your college years

What experiences are relevant?

- Personal experiences – family, friends, patients
- Clinical experiences – volunteering, work, family (e.g., parent is a dentist)
- Service experiences – tutoring, volunteering, service job
- Academic experiences – classes and labs
- Research experiences – lab, clinical, non-science critical-reading research

Pitfalls

- Avoid rewriting your resume. You don't need to include everything.
- Don't start with a story about something that happened when you were 5. Focus on experiences in your college years. (Although there may be a short story that goes back further.)
- Don't overuse "I" to start a sentence
- Avoid focusing on someone else and not yourself (e.g., a patient you got to know)
- Don't start with "I want to be a doctor because..."