

Steps to take to write a powerful personal statement

Some information to consider including - meaning pick a couple, but not necessarily all:

- Family members who are also working in your specialty.
- Personal experience within the specialty.
- Your research into the specialty (sub-I, volunteerism, research, experience as patient?)
- What you are considering post-training?
- Your background (academic, social, or hardships overcome).
- Passions, hobbies, interests, etc. that have led you to this particular specialty choice.
- Noteworthy accomplishments or honors within the field (stick to med school if possible)

Information to leave out:

- Never criticize or complain about faculty, patients, parents, or anything at all.
- Avoid sounding cocky, shallow, or overly-eccentric (not an opportunity to be weird)
- Do not bring up politics or religion.
- You do not need to discuss your background and entire life story, unless relevant.
 - Your background will be covered in your MSPE Unique Characteristics section.
 - Likewise, your academic/service/research accomplishments will be in your CV.
- Leave out any mention of salary, lifestyle needs, time-consuming hobbies/activities, etc.
- If you apply to more than one specialty, write a separate personal statement for each.
- Do not narrow your options! For instance:
 - Don't discuss your devotion to community-service if you're applying to a high-powered research institution, and vice versa.
 - Leave out future plans if they are not directly supported by the specific institution.

5-step writing process:

- **Preparation** - compile information, free-write, seek counseling from friends and advisors, identify your most notable and relevant strengths, achievements, and abilities.
- **Outline** – This will help separate the good ideas from the bad, and it will help with flow.
- **Draft** – Be clear and concise, avoid jargon, use standard fonts, and keep to one page.
- **Edit** – Put your draft away for a day or two, then come back to it with fresh eyes.
 - Read it aloud - do you stumble over sentences? Do the ideas flow logically? Does anything sound negative or hesitant? Do you over-use the word "I" (or any other words)?
 - Eliminate unnecessary words ("definitely, actually, generally, basically," etc.) and redundant combinations of words ("future plans," "end result," "final outcome," "unexpected surprise," "basic fundamentals," etc.). Keep it crisp and make sure it flows from word to word, sentence to sentence, and paragraph to paragraph.
 - **Check for grammatical errors** - When it comes to a personal statement, absolutely nothing will hurt you more than projecting laziness through poor grammar or misspelled words!
- **Proofread** – Print your personal statement to see how it looks on paper vs. on the computer...also be sure to print from ERAS to see how it will look to programs.
 - Is it too cluttered? Are the fonts and margins big enough? Are there run-on sentences? Are there any misspelled words? Is the punctuation correct?
 - After you have completed the above steps, seek advice from peers, mentors, family, and ultimately the Graduate Writing Center at the following link:
<http://qsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/reservations/>

Steps to take to write a powerful CV

To develop a strong curriculum vitae (CV), it is important to realize the function it will have in the residency application process. Namely, your CV is a tool for acquiring interviews and guiding the conversation during those interviews. Understanding this functionality makes it imperative to focus not only on the content, but also on a format that attracts and facilitates interviews.

Bear in mind that the audience reading your CV will be reviewing dozens, if not hundreds, of other CVs. A bleary-eyed, busy physician may not give your CV the time it deserves if it is not easy to read. You want to leave the reader wanting more, not less. Ideally, the potential interviewer will want to know more about an experience listed on your CV, prompting them to invite you for an interview.

How is this done? Well, even though this may seem counterintuitive, the page should have more blank space than text. Wall-to-wall print is overwhelming and difficult to read. If you have a lot of accomplishments, that's great. But be sure that the ones you are trying to highlight are not lost in a big list. Don't include anything on your CV that you would not want to become the main focus of an interview. This may mean removing some smaller endeavors to emphasize more important achievements, which should pop off the page and grab the reader's attention. Use bold, underlined, and italic lettering in appropriate areas. Think of your CV as a list of talking points for your interview.

In most cases, CVs are now submitted online through the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS). This means that you must format your CV within the confines of the ERAS format. You must familiarize yourself with this format by using the worksheet here:

<https://www.aamc.org/download/139512/data/worksheet.pdf>. The ERAS application is divided into these categories: Education, Experience (Work, Research, or Volunteer), Publications, Languages, Hobbies and Interests, Awards, Accomplishments, and Memberships in Honorary or Professional Societies.

Developing experiences within each of these categories will help you produce a successful CV. Residency program directors will review it to determine whether you will be a diligent resident, a good addition to their program, and potentially a leader in their field. When you are choosing how to spend your limited extracurricular time in medical school, it may help to think of the ERAS categories the way a program director would view them. Imagine a program director going through this thought process:

- **Education:** Does the applicant's medical school have a history of producing residents who have done well in our department or hospital?
- **Experience:** Has the applicant engaged in activities that will prepare him/her to be a diligent resident?
- **Publications, awards, and accomplishments:** Has the applicant shown commitment to research, leadership, or service? Might he/she bring national attention to our program or become a leader in our field?
- **Languages:** Many of our patients speak language "X", and the applicant speaks it, too; this will be very useful in the clinical setting.
- **Hobbies and interests:** Does the applicant have any interests in common with my faculty, my residents, or myself? (This could easily become a main topic of conversation in the interview.)
- **Memberships in honorary or professional societies:** Does the applicant clearly have an appreciation for the professional community within which he/she will be practicing?

Finally, these tips may help with the nuts and bolts of developing a good CV:

- Update it regularly for thoroughness and to save time when you finally start the application process.
- Ask several people to review your CV for typos, spelling, and grammatical errors. Such errors can be detrimental to an otherwise strong application.
- Use the book *Getting into a Residency: A Guide for Medical Students* as an additional resource, both for CV development and for the residency application process in general.
- Make an appointment with the Graduate Writing Center at the following link:
<http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/reservations/>