

## Personal Statement Checklist

This is a starting point for writing your personal statement. You do not need to check all the boxes on the list to have a great personal statement. It's most important for you to tell your story and write a statement that makes a residency program director want to meet you.

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Who are you?             | <input type="checkbox"/> Describe the story of who you are related to medicine<br><input type="checkbox"/> Describe your unique personality and background  |
| Why this specialty?      | <input type="checkbox"/> Document in first half of statement<br><input type="checkbox"/> Explain why you came to decide on the specialty<br><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate commitment to specialty            |
| Skills and Values        | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills (general medicine or other non-medical)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Values are documented and explained   |
| Fit                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills/personal attributes align with specialty/residency program<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ability to overcome difficulties<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ability to contribute to a team |
| Career & Residency Goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Identify what you want in a residency<br><input type="checkbox"/> Identify career goals (if known)   |
| Flow                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas flow logically<br><input type="checkbox"/> Each paragraph centers on an idea or theme<br><input type="checkbox"/> Smooth transitions between ideas in each paragraph                 |
| Grammar                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Correct punctuation and spelling<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sparing use of I/me   |
| Review/Editing           | <input type="checkbox"/> One editor who knows you and your voice<br><input type="checkbox"/> One editor with specialty-specific knowledge<br><input type="checkbox"/> One editor for grammar/flow                   |

### Specialty Tips for Personal Statements

These are general suggestions submitted by Departmental Career Advisors (DCA). Please follow up directly with a DCA specialty advisor with specialty-specific questions.

| Specialty                            | Primary Focus of Personal Statement   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Anesthesiology                       | Identify what makes you unique and how your attributes make you an ambassador as a consultant in anesthesiology.  |
| Dermatology                          | Modify your personal statement for each program. Be sure to emphasize who you are and what drives you to pursue dermatology.  |
| Diagnostic Radiology                 | Patient care is at the heart of radiology. Don't let your excitement about technology drown out your interest and focus on patient care and healing.  |
| Emergency Medicine                   | Take time to think about why you are choosing EM and what it is about you that makes this a good fit. Avoid coming off like you are in it for the adrenaline or lights-and-sirens. Consider tailoring for some programs (especially geographically far ones). |
| Family Medicine                      | It is important to convey a commitment to the specialty or to a particular community. Even if you decide late to pursue family medicine, your story should show how your interests have converged in this specialty.  |
| General Surgery                      | Identify why you decided on surgery and why your choice make sense.   |
| Internal Medicine                    | See IM's guide (page 3).  |
| Neurological Surgery                 | Identify what inspired you to follow this path. Do you have the passion, intellectual and personal comprehension of what this field takes to be excellent?  |
| Neurology                            | Demonstrate you are hardworking and committed to the specialty.   |
| OB/GYN                               | Share something unique, not necessarily related to medicine, if possible to make you memorable. Demonstrate grit and drive.   |
| Ophthalmology                        | Identify commitment and reasons for choosing the field. Also any of your unique, personal characteristics or past experiences.  |
| Orthopaedics                         | It needs to be personal, interesting and make the reader want to meet you.  |
| Otolaryngology                       | Demonstrate commitment to otolaryngology. Explain your passion, motivations, and vision for a career as an otolaryngologist.  |
| Pathology                            | Discuss how you understand that pathology is critical to patient care. Do not talk about how you decided you don't want to see patients.  |
| Pediatrics                           | Most successful candidates are usually a 'person for others'.   |
| Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation | Demonstrate that you know the depth and breadth of what PM&R is and what it means to practice. Have a good attitude towards people with a disability.   |
| Plastic Surgery                      | This is your story, not the story of the specialty. Be introspective and don't simply use a personal anecdote as the reason for choosing this specialty.  |
| Psychiatry                           | Demonstrate a good reason for choosing the specialty. It is ok to mention, but do not emphasize, one's own mental health problems or mental health problems in the family.  |
| Radiation Oncology                   | Be yourself.  |
| Urology                              | Point out something that is not apparent from the other application materials or something that you would like to highlight. This should be something that sets you apart from other applicants.  |

## **IM PERSONAL STATEMENT ADVICE**

The personal statement (PS) is your opportunity to communicate to residency programs information about you that cannot be found elsewhere in your ERAS application. Programs want to know more about you! Our top advice is:

**Tell your story** Share what makes you tick, a unique background, experience, insight, failure, redemption, journey, etc. A story that underscores your foundational grounding and illustrates who you are at your core.

**Set the scene--broadly**—Don't go overboard setting the scene with minute details. In broad strokes set the scene, adding in relevant who, what, when, where and why's.

**Transition to the future** At some point toward the end of your story, in a few sentences (1-3) transition to the future and how IM training is a part of that, tying in how the experience will contribute to your career in medicine.

For nontraditional backgrounds, relating the journey that pointed you to medicine nicely brings your PS to the present application. Often this in itself is interesting....how did an actor end up in medicine? How did a college dropout become a medical student? How did refugee end up in Spokane for clerkships? Your stories are behind these transitions and how you got from A-to-B can speak volumes about you.

**Patient stories** Not needed, so don't feel you have to add one. If it's interesting and relates to your story or future career goals, it is fine to share. But don't feel you must include a patient story.

**You don't need to convince us you want to specialize in IM** Keep that to a minimum, final paragraph is fine.

**Think scanner not reader** Grab the readers attention first sentences of the first paragraph. This also applies to the last paragraph and the first sentence of each paragraph in between.

**Avoid conversations** This can come across as contrived and takes up precious space on your page.

**Be prepared to discuss your PS in interviews** Students are surprised how often their PS is discussed during interviews. A word of caution: if you share something in your PS, e.g. a loved one passing away, assess how you will feel when asked about this by a stranger (albeit likely a kind & compassionate one).

**Keep to one page**

**Talk with us first if you plan to discuss academic/step/personal issues in your PS**

**Summary paragraph** End your PS by including the following in the last paragraph:

- What you are looking for in residency.
- What you can contribute to a residency.
- Career goals if you are applying to a specific track – e.g. primary care.
- A preference statement can also be directed to a specific program and address things that are particularly appealing about that program such as...
  - Curricular elements, diversity/inclusion efforts, culture at the program, etc.
  - Geographic preference. Some students have compelling reasons why they need to match in a specific geographic area. Frequently it is to accommodate their spouse/partners employment, or be close to family. A sentence stating why you are applying to a geographic area lets the residency programs know you are serious about your application to their program and why. This is especially helpful if the program does not have a history of matching many UW students to their program.