

# UW SOM Personal Statement Worksheet

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## A. Preparing

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**Step 1: Brainstorm** answers to these questions.

**What three words describe me?** Ask your classmates, friends, and family.

**What are my strengths? What am I good at that is valued by my desired specialty?**

**What accomplishments and experiences highlight my strengths, values and fit with my desired specialty? What accomplishments in my life make me proud?**

**What obstacles have I faced and what have I learned from them?**

**Are there extenuating circumstances or sensitive issues I may need to address?** E.g., academic difficulties, extended time in medical school.

**What are my professional goals?**

**What is the one thing I want all programs to know about me?**

**Step 2: Reflect** on your “hook.”

This mechanism highlights (1) personal characteristics, (2) journey to and/or enthusiasm for the specialty, and (3) professional growth. Consider a compelling personal or patient story that makes the committee want to know more. If you choose a patient story or one about another person, it should underscore your own qualities.

**How did this experience impact my character formation, growth, and abilities?**

**What aspects of my character does it highlight?**

**What lessons did I learn?**

**Was it a step in my journey to discovering my chosen field and if so, how?**

## B. Writing and Structuring

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**Step 3: Free write** a rough draft with content from Steps 1 and 2.

## Step 4 & Step 5: Organize and incorporate content from Steps 1 and 2.

**Introductory Paragraph:** Use your hook to grab the reader and make them want to know more. Highlight your characteristics and strengths.

**Body Paragraphs (2-3):** Expand on your content from Steps 1 and 2. Essential details that a program must know about you, your proudest accomplishments. Strengths and characteristics related to your specialty and leadership experiences.

**Closing Paragraph:** State what you value in a training program and what you can contribute. Name your professional goals. If you are customizing your Personal Statement for a specific program, then add 2-3 sentences. Add 2-3 summary sentences that tie back to the most important content from your introductory and supporting paragraphs.

## C. Optimizing

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**Step 6: Evaluate the flow** of your writing. Your narrative should flow naturally as a story and be easy to follow (often chronologically). Ensure that it is written formally with no slang or abbreviations.

**Step 7: Rest your draft** for a week. Then read it aloud and make changes based on your re-evaluation.

**Step 8: Get Feedback** from two physicians in your field, a mentor in medicine who knows you well, and an advisor. Update your draft based on their feedback:

- Is it interesting, with a compelling hook?
- Is your interest in your specialty demonstrated and clear?
- Are your strengths, characteristics, and the accomplishments you are most proud of evident?
- Are your professional goals clear?
- If you identified challenges or sensitive issues in Step 1, is it evident in your draft?
- Is there good flow to each paragraph and between paragraphs?

Updated your draft after feedback.

**Step 9: Edit your draft** for grammar and spelling. Have someone with strong editing skills review it.

**Step 10: Rest your draft** for a week. Then read it aloud and make updates based on your re-evaluation. If substantial changes were required in step 8, consider sending it to a trusted mentor and repeating Steps 8-9.

## D. Ready to Submit!

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