

# Writing a Medical School Personal Statement (AMCAS)

## Length

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- 5,300 characters including spaces.

## Tone

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- The tone of your AMCAS “Personal Comments” essay should be more formal than an undergraduate personal statement, but less formal than a residency personal statement or other job applications. That means using standard English and generally avoiding contractions (writing out “I am” instead of using “I’m”), but not using stilted language or constructions.
- Avoid positioning yourself as zany or idiosyncratic. This is a popular approach to undergraduate personal statements, but it won’t come off well in the medical school admissions context. Using humor or too much wit is inadvisable as well. Your essay doesn’t need to be solemn, but the overall tone should be serious.
- Avoid hyper-emotionality. “Aha” moments and tear-jerkers are not great ideas. There should be enough feeling in your writing to give your essay rhetorical force (after all, there should definitely be some emotion if you are writing about your passions, a challenge you’ve overcome, or your aspirations for the future), but do not bank on overwhelming your reader with emotion to gain admission.

## Content

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- Answer the basic question: “Why medicine?” Whatever personal qualities or narrative anecdotes you feature in your essay should always connect back to your desire and aptitude to study and practice medicine.
- Highlight your academic and scientific preparedness. Show your reader that you are ready for the rigors of medical school academics by describing your inclination toward and achievement in your past academic and scientific pursuits. That said, you should generally avoid including your GPA or grades you received in specific courses—the admissions committee has your transcript for that information.
- Describe your clinical experiences. If you have a lot of clinical experience, emphasize instances that stand out to you. Focus on what you did (as opposed to just witnessed), capacities you gained (this can include things you learned intellectually, but—again—avoid “aha” moments), and how that prepares you for medical studies.

- Provide a sense of cohesion in your trajectory. This essay should give the reader a sense of who you are, where you have been, and where you are heading, and “where you are heading” should build on “who you are” and “where you have been” in a way that is easy to follow.
- You don’t need to talk about a specific specialty that you are interested in. You can discuss this if it is a relevant part of your story and interest in medicine, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

## Format

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- Formatting your essay is not a big deal because you will likely be copy/pasting your essay into AMCAS’ online form, so you will lose any formatting you had.
  - Italics and bold are stripped when you copy/paste into the form, so don’t use them in your essay (use quotation marks for titles of books, etc.).
- Do not indent your paragraphs because it uses up characters (use a hard return instead).



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