

Personal Statement Revision Guide

Substance

1. Is each point you make backed up by a concrete example?
2. Have you been specific?
3. What does the essay say about you? Is this an accurate description?
4. Does the writing sound like you? Is it personal, informal, and conversational in tone?

Structure

1. Identify the topic sentences of your paragraphs and read only them, in order.
 - a. Would someone who was reading only these sentences still understand exactly what you are trying to say?
 - b. Are all of your main points expressed in the topic sentences?
 - c. Do the thoughts in these sentences flow naturally, or do they seem to skip around or come out of the blue?
2. Look at your essay as a whole.
 - a. Does each paragraph stick to the thought that was introduced by each topic sentence?
 - b. Is each point supported by evidence? How well does the evidence support the point?
 - c. Is each paragraph of roughly the same length? Do the paragraphs seem balanced? Do longer paragraphs contain only one thought or are you trying to squeeze too much into them?
 - d. Does your conclusion flow naturally from your other paragraphs?
 - e. Have you varied the length and structure of your sentences?
 - f. Have you expressed yourself clearly and concisely?
 - g. Do you have clear transitions between paragraphs?

Interest

1. Is your opening paragraph personal? Do you start with action or an image? Do you capture the reader's attention and hold it?
1. Do you distinguish yourself from others?
2. At what point does your essay really begin? Can you delete everything before that?
3. Does the essay show (with details) rather than tell?
4. Did you use any words that you wouldn't use in polite conversation? Did you take any words from a thesaurus?
5. Have you used an active voice? Are your verbs active and interesting?
6. Have you overused adjectives and adverbs?
7. Have you eliminated trite expressions and clichés?
8. Does your essay sound interesting to you?
9. Will the ending give the reader a sense of completeness? Does the last sentence sound like the last sentence?

10. Is your writing upbeat, positive, and confident?
11. Have you introduced any controversial material?

Grammar and Spelling

1. Did you run spell check?
2. Did you punctuate correctly?
3. Did you capitalize clearly and in a consistent manner?
4. Do the subjects agree in number with verbs?
5. Did you keep contractions to a minimum? Are apostrophes in the right places?
6. Is your statement well written in standard essay format?

Final Dos and Don'ts

| Do... | Don't... |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get personal. ▪ Be yourself. ▪ Tell a story. ▪ Use details, but not excessively so. ▪ Be honest and sincere. ▪ Write about what interests you. ▪ Plan before you write. ▪ Show instead of tell. ▪ Be specific. ▪ Start writing your first draft early. ▪ Be concise. ▪ Establish your identity and write in the first person. ▪ Elaborate on experiences that demonstrate your personality traits and motivation to pursue medicine. ▪ Turn weaknesses into strengths. Steer the essay toward your strong points. ▪ Be self-confident. ▪ Schedule a Writing Center conference. ▪ Revise, proofread, and read aloud. ▪ Pay attention to the character limit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mention high school accomplishments unless outstandingly relevant. ▪ Discuss controversial subjects like politics or religion or something from your past that could be embarrassing. ▪ Be overly creative or use gimmicks; you may come off as cutesy or immature. Err on the conservative side. ▪ Write what you think the admissions committee wants to hear. ▪ Be overly formal. ▪ Exaggerate or embellish. ▪ Use jargon or technical language. ▪ Don't tell the admissions committee what it takes to be a doctor (they already know, and probably better than you do). ▪ Use a thesaurus if you can avoid it. If you do use a thesaurus, only use words that you know the exact meaning and connotations of (a dictionary can help you with this). ▪ Name drop. ▪ Begin every sentence with "I." ▪ Start with a joke unless you're naturally funny. ▪ Underestimate the importance of the essay. |