Importance of Personal Statements

Reveals your personality, strengths and weaknesses.

Example: “I am very shy and I don’t like being in a group.”

Admissions Committee has your academic record.

Try to communicate your voice and personality while maintaining a formal style.
What is Formal Writing?

- Avoid slang, speaking language
- Avoid overly emotional, ironic, sarcastic, dramatic language
- Imagine speaking to a respected older person
- BUT, personal statements are less formal than other kinds of academic writing because you should try to capture your voice and personality
Audience: You must think carefully about who will read your writing (audience). What is their level of knowledge and what do they need to know from you as an author?
How Long should it Take?

3-4 Weeks

• Week 1 Brainstorming, drafting
• Week 2 Rewriting, multiple drafts
• Week 3 Leave it alone
• Week 4 Final Proofreading / Editing
The Basic Writing Process

Step 1: Planning
1a. Choose a topic
1b. Generate ideas
1c. Create an outline

Step 2: Drafting
2. Write the first draft

Step 3: Revising
3a. Edit and revise
3b. Proofread
3c. Submit

From: http://www.ingenuityworks.com/fun_games/process_writing/05c_subdividing.html
Basic writing

Brainstorming:

- Getting ideas down
- Discussing with friends and counselors (peer review)
- Freewriting
- Visual diagrams – flow charts, clustering
GOOD LONG-TERM EFFECTS
Flora (trees)

BAD

Less snow in New England?
Good skiing in CO
Mild winter in N. plains
Flowers in Death Valley
How powerless we are.
Global implications
Mysterious causes
Next Year??

Bad:
Gas prices
Power costs
Mudslides in CA
Insurance costs skyrocket
Flash flood in AZ
Heavy rains
Tornadoes in FL
Cost of crops
Ice storm in Maine
Schools out 2 weeks
Dead oranges
Outlining and Reverse Outlining

Basic writing
Using the Library and Other Information Sources

I. Introduction to the library
   A. Programs of orientation and instruction
      1. Pamphlets, handbooks, other materials
      2. Orientation tours, lectures, courses.
   B. Books about the library (cite examples)

II. The central catalog or central information system
   A. The online central catalog
      1. Definition and description
      2. Searching the online catalog
         a. Searching by author, title, subject, keywords
         b. Limiting the search
         c. Using Boolean logic
            (1) Definition of Boolean logic
            (2) Examples of Boolean logic
      3. Information accessed from the online catalog
   B. Information needed for research and writing
   C. The card catalog and other catalogs
   D. The central information system

III. Reference works
   A. Types of reference works
      1. Indexes
      2. Bibliographies
      3. Collections of abstracts
      4. Guides to research
      5. Dictionaries
      6. Encyclopedias
      7. Biographical sources
      8. Yearbooks
      9. Atlases
   B. Publication forms of reference works
   C. Searching a reference database

IV. Location of library materials
   A. Classification systems
      1. Dewey decimal system
      2. Library of Congress system
   B. Main collection (open shelves, closed stacks)

... and so forth ...

Conclusion — knowledge of the library and successful research papers.
“Burn it! Burn it! His arm is gashing with blood!” A commander says. “But the pain will be so great that he might die.” A soldier said. The commander willingly took the iron rod and placed it on the vein. The wounded soldier screams in agony and pain. His skin starts to burn all over his arm. The skin begins to die off and eventually it turns into a scab. A few years pass and the soldier (who was wounded) goes for treatment. “You know this scab is a site of infection.” The doctor says. The soldier sites their thinking for a minute. He looks around and sees that there are many people coming into his office with the same condition. The cauterization done by the general had worked at the moment but had caused long-term defects. So how can we define the correct method of cauterization?

To many of us medicine has come from a variety of sources. This vast break of knowledge that we humans endure comes from our past. From the past we are capable of initiating a brighter future. From our ancestors, we have learnt how to cure certain illnesses. In ancient Egypt honey was used for curing the ill, the Arabs later used honey as a means of curing illnesses. As we see there are ways in which we have taken different paths into finding new and necessary cures. People of different regions have come up with different cures. In the Muslim world the teachings of the prophet have long been lived to this day. His sayings or Hadiths have always been the basis to the medical
Reverse Outline

I. Story to introduce topic
   A. Topic sentence

II. Importance of topic
   A. Example of honey
   B. Religion and medicine

III. Quote from Hadith
   A. What is cauterization?
   B. Where practiced?
   C. History of cauterization
   D. Quote from someone cauterized

IV. Medical doctors on cauterization
   A. Opposition to cauterization
   B. Evidence-based approach

V. Conclusion - Cautery today and future
I. Story to introduce topic
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Another example

II. Importance of topic
   A. Example of honey
   B. Religion and medicine

III. Quote from Hadith
   A. What is cautery?
   B. Where practiced?
   C. History of cautery
   D. Quote from someone cautioned

IV. Medical Doctors on Cautery
   A. Opposition to cautery
   B. Evidence-based approach

V. Conclusion - Cautery today and future
Basic writing

Multiple Drafts

and Peer (Expert) Review
Multiple Drafts

- Between each draft do major revisions, like changing the order or paragraphs, adding more evidence and examples.
- Between drafts, do content editing, use a peer editor, and the ‘objective distance’ technique.
- Use SAVE AS function and print out a new paper draft instead of overwriting one document.
Expert Review = professional, mentor, higher level of knowledge and skill than yourself

Peer = someone at your level of knowledge and skill
Expert Review

Ask for feedback from someone who is more knowledgeable in the subject of language and writing, like a teacher, school counselor or older student.
Peer Review

Ask for feedback from someone who is at your same level of language and writing, and whose opinion you respect and value, like a friend or fellow student. Ask a friend if the essay reflects you as a person.
Important: Peer Review

Ask your peer reviewer to look at the main important features of the essay (NOT spelling, grammar):

1. Interesting and unique essay (describes YOU)?
2. Organized?
3. Logical?
4. Transitions from idea to idea?
5. Understandable (correct words used)?
6. Repetitive?
Important: Peer Review

As a writer, you are ultimately responsible for the final essay. Think carefully about any changes that a peer reviewer suggests. Not all suggestions from peer reviews, even expert peer reviewers, are good, so pick and choose the ones that you think will improve the essay.

If in doubt, save a copy of your draft, then make the suggested changes. If they don’t work, then go back to your original draft.
Basic writing

Editing

**Content Editing = Major Changes**

Multiple drafts – self, peer, expert review
Read out loud (try to hear your own voice – does it sound like me?)
Read out loud to another person
Reverse outlining

**Copyediting or Proofreading = Minor Changes**

Put pencil on each word
Read backwards
Target your Drafts

A major editing draft should be a separate draft from a proofreading draft.
Basic Writing

Objective distance: Leave it alone
Avoid writing at the last minute and then submitting the essay. Finish the essay and don’t look at it for at least one or two weeks before the deadline. Then go back and re-read the essay with a fresh perspective.
Avoid Overwriting

- Keep your previous drafts (Use SAVE AS in Microsoft Word). Don’t keep overwriting the same draft.

- You might like a previous draft better after making changes suggested by a peer reviewer.

- If your draft becomes disorganized and messy, use the reverse outline process.
Basic Writing: Final Proofreading

1. Put pencil on each word
2. Read backwards
3. Use a Peer editor
Student personal statements are expected to be original and written by the students themselves (they can receive assistance from peer editors or mentors). The essay should reflect the personality and language use of the student applying to medical school.
As I tightly wrapped my fingers around it, I felt a job bigger than I ever dreamed possible. I had won the Al Buttuta School Prize for best volunteer. I remember being fatigued by my efforts, but I knew there were two paths: slow down and give up my chance of winning to gain momentary comfort, or push myself even harder and give up momentary comfort to receive greater rewards later. I chose the second path and later held a trophy that represented my perseverance and hard work. My sacrifices in working as a volunteer at the Qatar Skilled Nursing Center taught me discipline and perseverance. These qualities will help me cross a different finish line and achieve a new goal: becoming a doctor.

I have had to learn to budget my time to meet the demands of school, training programs, and volunteer activities. I worked in the volunteer center for 6 hours every week, and I also helped my brothers and sisters with their homework. My most satisfying volunteer activity, however, was participating at the Skilled Nursing Center.

At the center, I continually saw young and old people whose suffering was overwhelming. These patients suffered from many problems. They also frequently had infections that antibiotics can easily treat. I will never forget the feeling of complete fulfillment after a long day of using my talents for the betterment of others. The desire to replicate this feeling strengthens my commitment to becoming a physician.
If plagiarism were detected, this application would be removed from the applicant pool. WCMC-Q would assume that the student was intentionally misrepresenting herself (dishonesty).
Final Checklist

- Captures voice and personality?
- Clearly states reasons for becoming a doctor?
- Well Organized?
  - One main theme?
  - Contains introduction, body, conclusion?
  - Each paragraph has a topic sentence?
  - Transition between each paragraph?
- Avoids clichés?
- Avoids repetition?
- Uses specific examples: avoids general, vague or abstract ideas?
- Words spelled correctly?
- Punctuation is correct?
- Grammar is correct?
- Correct word is used (word choice)?
Conciseness

Conciseness: An important aspect of many forms of writing along with clarity and accuracy.
1. Eliminate unnecessary determiners and modifiers

Writers sometimes clog up their prose with one or more extra words or phrases that seem to determine narrowly or to modify the meaning of a noun but don’t actually add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases can be meaningful in the appropriate context, they are often used as "filler" and can easily be eliminated.

**Wordy**

Any particular type of dessert is fine with me.

Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.

**More Concise**

Any dessert is fine with me.

Balancing the budget by Friday is impossible without extra help.
2. Change phrases into single words

Using phrases to convey meaning that could be presented in a single word contributes to wordiness. Convert phrases into single words when possible.

Wordy

The employee with ambition...

The department showing the best performance...

Jeff Converse, our chief of consulting, suggested at our last board meeting the installation of microfilm equipment in the department of data processing.

As you carefully read what you have written to improve your wording and catch small errors of spelling, punctuation, and so on, the thing to do before you do anything else is to try to see where a series of words expressing action could replace the ideas found in nouns rather than verbs.

More Concise

The ambitious employee...

The best-performing department...
3. Change unnecessary that, who, and which clauses into phrases

Using a clause to convey meaning that could be presented in a phrase or even a word contributes to wordiness. Convert modifying clauses into phrases or single words when possible.

Wordy

The report, which was released recently...

All applicants who are interested in the job must...

The system that is most efficient and accurate...

More Concise

The recently released report...

All job applicants must...

The most efficient and accurate system...
Wordy

*It is* the governor *who* signs or vetoes bills.

*There are* four rules *that* should be observed: ...

*There was* a big explosion, *which* shook the windows, and people ran into the street.

More Concise

The governor signs or vetoes bills.

Four rules should be observed:...

A big explosion shook the windows, and people ran into the street.
Good luck and remember that students need to tell us who they are and why they want to be a doctor!
Writing Resources

Purdue Online Writing Lab

http://owl.english.purdue.edu