

Application Writing 2024-2025 Cycle



HPP Winter 2024

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First: A Free Writing Exercise to Get Us Started

Pg 4 of Writing Packet-choose one question.

- Keep your hand moving
- Don't cross out or erase
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar
- Lose control-no judging
- Truth

And... Deep Breath

What are the WRITING components of a Med, Dental or Vet Application?

PRIMARY (aka Common App)

Work and Activities Section

Personal Statement/Essay

(+TMDSAS and VMCAS have some smaller essays)

AND, when relevant:

-Impact Statement

-Institutional Action

SECONDARY APPS

Distinct to each school: ~2-8 Q's

Writing for Medical Schools (hint: focus on character counts last)

AMCAS (ALLOPATHIC)

5300 Character Personal Statement (spaces included)-Your Motivation for Medicine

15 Experiences (700-character description)

- 3 Most Meaningful (700 characters, PLUS an additional 1325 characters)

Formatting does not appear to the medical schools (bullets, indented paragraphs, bold/italic). Copy and paste as plain text.

MD/PhD (requires total hours of research experience)

- Additional MD/PhD Essay (3000 characters)
- Additional Significant Research Experience Essay (10,000 characters)

AMCAS APPLICATION GUIDE

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/11616/download>

AACOMAS (OSTEOPATHIC)

5300 Character Personal Statement (spaces included)

Unlimited experiences, 600-character description

- Don't go overboard on # of experiences!

Formatting does not appear to medical schools (bullets, indented paragraphs, bold/italic). Copy and paste as plain text.

AACOMAS APPLICATION GUIDE

https://help.liasonedu.com/AACOMAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Filling_Out_Your_AACOMAS_Application

TEXAS TMDSAS differs from AMCAS

Experiences

- 300-characters
 - Unlimited # of experiences
-

Essays

1. **Personal Statement: “Why Medicine”:** 5000 characters
2. **Personal Characteristics Essay (Required of all applicants):** 2500 characters
 - ❑ Learning from others is enhanced in educational settings that include individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Please describe your personal characteristics (background, talents, skills, etc.) or experiences that would add to the educational experience of others.
3. **Optional Essay: Strongly Recommend to complete:** 2500 characters
 - ❑ Briefly discuss any unique circumstances or life experiences that are relevant to your application, which have not previously been presented.

Writing for Dental/Veterinary Programs

DENTAL

4500 Character Personal Statement (spaces included)

Experiences (600 characters)

[ADEA AADSAS Guide](#)

VETERINARY: DIFFERS

Under Personal Information

- There are many career choices within the veterinary profession. What are your future career goals and why? (2000 characters)
- In what ways do veterinarians contribute to society and what do you hope to contribute? (2000 characters)
- Consider the breadth of society which veterinarians serve. What attributes do you believe are essential to be successful within the veterinary profession? Of these attributes, which do you possess and how have you demonstrated these in the past? (2000 characters)

Under Supporting Information

- Experiences (600 characters)

[VMCAS Guide](#)

AMCAS Work/Activities

- 700 characters per activity, plus 1325 characters more for 3 most meaningful
- You can enter up to 15 experiences
- For each “most meaningful,” consider the transformative nature of the experience; the impact on you; the impact you made; personal growth you experienced as a result of participating

AMCAS Work/Activities

700 characters per activity, plus 1325 more for 3 most meaningful

DROP DOWN: EXPERIENCE TYPES

- Artistic Endeavors
- Community Service/Volunteer - Medical/Clinical
- Community Service/Volunteer - Not Medical/Clinical
- Conferences Attended
- Extracurricular Activities
- Hobbies
- Honors/Awards/Recognitions
- Intercollegiate Athletics
- Leadership - Not Listed Elsewhere
- Military Service
- Other
- Paid Employment - Medical/Clinical
- Paid Employment - Not Medical/Clinical
- Physician Shadowing/Clinical Observation
- Presentations/Posters
- Publications
- Research/Lab
- Social Justice/Advocacy
- Teaching/Tutoring/Teaching Assistant

AMCAS Work/Activities also asks:


- Experience Name
 - (use this space well to grab attention! For example, instead of just “Tutoring,” put down “Tutored General Chemistry; or instead of only “Patient Support Corps” write “Patient Support Corps: Shared Decision-Making Volunteer
- Dates: Up to 4 start and end dates; including the option for an anticipated activity
- Total Hours (for each set of dates)
- Organization Name
- Contact info
- Experience Description (700 Characters)
- Most Meaningful Experience? Yes/No (choose 3) If YES, more space will open up to allow up to +1325 more characters to expand on.

For Work and Activities

Hours: How much time did you spend (you need a realistic accounting of hours-go term by term)

CONSIDER:

- What did you learn?
- Roles and responsibilities-skills learned and/or demonstrated
- What are you taking away from this experience?
- What impact has this had on you?
- How has this continued to motivate/inspire you?
- Why has this been meaningful to you
- How did you feel about this?
- How has it changed you/helped you grow?



Now is the time to get Organized: What HAVE you been up to?

What experiences have you had?

What roles have you had?

What responsibilities did you take on?

Did you gain skills? Insights? Growth?

Common Questions:

- 1. Highschool experiences?
- 2. Non-Related medical experiences?
- 3. Hobbies?
- 4. What to do if you have MORE than 15 experiences?
- 5. Will AMCAS verify my hours?
- 6. Other?



THE PERSONAL STATEMENT/ESSAY

A chance to communicate cohesively and specifically, about what, in exploring medicine, has been meaningful to you and to convey your motivation for medicine.

5,300 characters (about 1.5 pages single space)
(Don't start out writing to the character count)

The Personal Statement

A chance to communicate cohesively and specifically, about what has been meaningful to you and conveys your motivation for medicine.

5,300 characters

Don't write to the character count at First! You can "cut" last!

What experiences, insights, moments, etc will best help illustrate your interest in/affirmation of/preparation for medicine?

Personal Statement



**ESSAYS MUST BE WELL
WRITTEN AND
GENUINE**



**THE CONTENT
SHOULD
DEMONSTRATE AN
APPLICANT'S
MOTIVATION TO
BECOME A DOCTOR**



**THEY WANT TO SEE
STRONG WRITING
AND
COMMUNICATION
SKILLS**



**EVIDENCE OF
SKILLS/EXPERIENCES
NOT FOUND
ELSEWHERE IN
APPLICATION CAN BE
SHOWCASED**

Other Impactful Experiences:

Have you overcome challenges or obstacles in your life that you would like to describe in more detail? This could include lived experiences related to your family background, financial background, community setting, educational experiences, and/or other life circumstances.

Institutional Action:

Were you ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or medical school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, even though such action may not have interrupted your enrollment or required you to withdraw?

AMCAS Other Essay Prompts:

Other Impactful Experiences:

Have you overcome challenges or obstacles in your life that you would like to describe in more detail? This could include lived experiences related to your family background, financial background, community setting, educational experiences, and/or other life circumstances.

Institutional Action:

Were you ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or medical school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, even though such action may not have interrupted your enrollment or required you to withdraw?

- **One Primary, many secondaries. Each, several prompts.**
- **THEY take time. PLAN to work on secondaries, especially in June, July and August.**
- **Complete in timely fashion.**
- **Treat them with the same respect/quality as the primary. Med schools tell us they MATTER.**
- **Applications are COMPLETE, and ready to be reviewed when schools have MCAT /DAT/GRE score; Verified primary application; Composite Letter package; and Secondary application**

SECONDARY APPS

Secondary Applications

Common themes:

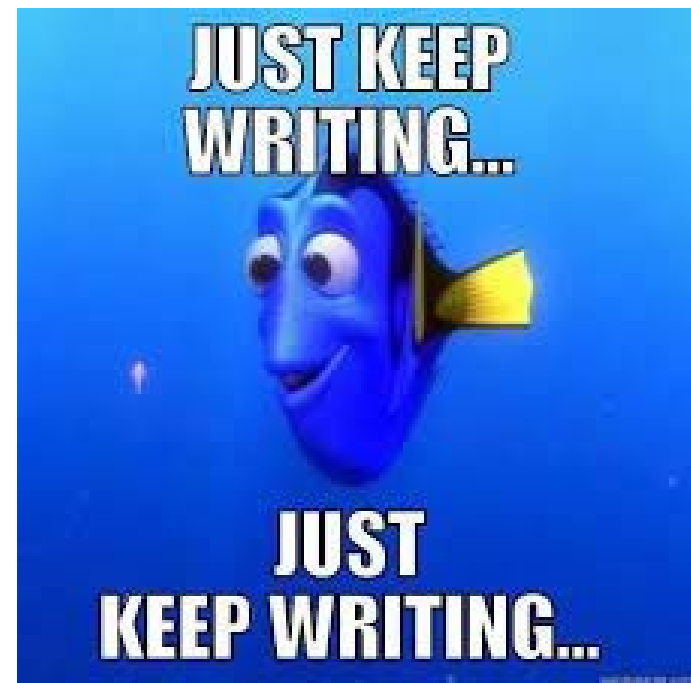
- COVID-19 disruptions
- Diversity/cultural competency
- Why [insert school]
- Plans for gap year
- Resiliency
- Goals/specialty interest
- Challenges
- Experience of Collaboration
- Accomplishments/points of pride/elaboration of meaningful experience
- Deeper dive into altruism, scholarly interest, teamwork, and healthcare exposure
- Anything else you'd like us to know

All secondary questions in current cycle get posted on SDN—still, double check on actual

AND DURING THE INTERVIEW SEASON and BEYOND

During the Interview Season you will also most likely submit:

- Thank you, Letter's Post-Interview
- 1-2 Update Letters and/or Letters of Continued Interest: if the school accepts them, some will not while others encourage it – depends on the school
- 1 Letter of Intent: Post Interview, should only go out to one school.



“No one who bothers about originality will ever be original; whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it.”

-C.S. Lewis

Writing is a process

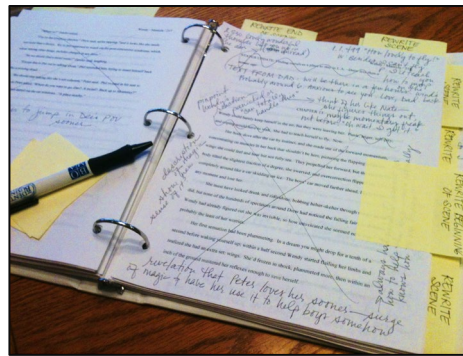
Freewrite (anytime in process)

Gather/Reflect

Pre-write

Draft

Craft



Free-write Exercise Rules

- Keep your hand moving
- Don't cross out or erase
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar
- Lose control-no judging
- Truth



Gather/Reflect

- Self-assessment gives you understanding of your own personal growth, life experiences, accomplishments and skills
- Recall events/things/people/courses/experiences that influenced you
- Contemplate and clarify your motivations, choices and clearly identify your own goals
- What has inspired you? Moved you? Shifted your perception? Challenged you?
- What has your journey been-when have you grown-what aspects do you want to focus on?

Reflection

WHAT IS REFLECTIVE WRITING?




Reflective writing is

- Personal thoughts/opinions
- A way explore your learning
- Response to new information
- Opportunity to gain knowledge
- Achieve clarity and understanding



Reflective writing is not

- Instructions, or an argument
- Simple problem-solving
- A description of an event
- Judgement about right or wrong
- A research paper

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Reflection = “serious thought or consideration.”

“The only way to find the answer to why medicine is through reflection. You have to understand what your goals are, and you have to reflect about how your journey is leading you there” – Dr. Ryan Gray MD.

Example: Non-Reflective vs. Reflective

Reflective Writing

It's not just about WHAT you did but also what your WHY.

-There should be a balance between providing details of what you did or what happened with your ability to articulate what this experience/example meant to you. **Reflection is very important!**

-For experiences/examples you share, consider writing:

- What did you learn?
- What are you taking away from this experience?
- What impact has this had on you?
- How has this continued to motivate/inspire you?
- Why has this been meaningful to you
- How did you feel about this?
- How has it changed you/helped you grow?

* You must be purposeful with the details you show and be able to articulate WHY this is important.

Pre-Write

Brainstorm and journal

Flesh out some critical reflective pieces

Use some of the prompts in the packet

After free writing, do some MINOR editing of these stories and pieces





A Personal Statement is a Narrative: This is **YOUR** story.

Describe: create a dominant impression

Narrate: provide evidence to support your points

Consider significance: reflect on and interpret your experience

Draft

Bring your ideas together

Is there a pattern?

What seem to be the most significant pieces?

Having trouble? Try a concept map

Don't be afraid to discard a piece of writing! Even if you love the story, if it's not a major component of the "why" question, you might be able to use it down the road on secondaries.

Craft

You have a full draft. You've chosen what you want to say.
Now it's time to refine and craft the writing itself.

Keep In Mind:

- Develop your own voice in the essay
- Well placed anecdote
- Examples/Specificity***
- Be honest & genuine
- Themes? “Golden Threads?”
- Good transitions between paragraphs/ cohesion
- Speak from your heart
- Effective conclusion
- Active language
- Get feedback, have readers, check all grammar and punctuation in final drafts

Avoid

- Gimmicks
- Generalities/vagueness
- Unsubstantiated statements
- Lists
- Passive structures
- Overusing words “big” words and words such as: however, thus, nevertheless
- Repeating what’s already in your experiences
- Saying what you think they want to hear
- Grammatical errors or typos
- Superficiality
- Hyperbole
- Philosophizing

Work/Activity Example

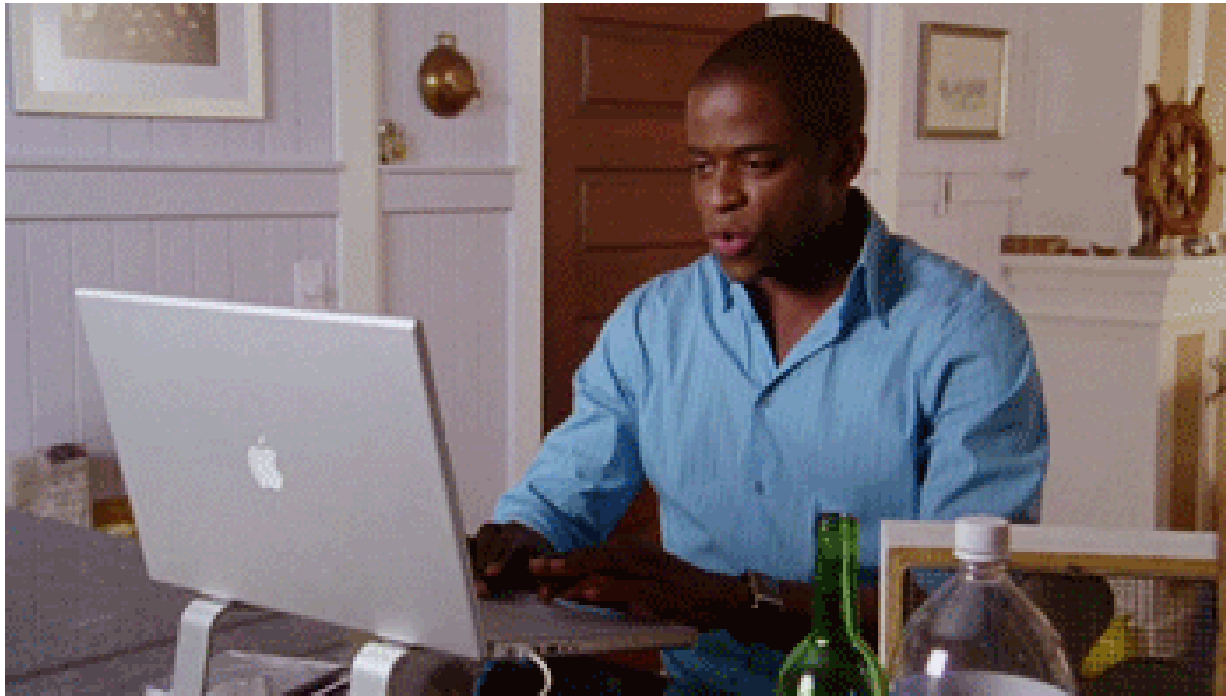
This program provided me with clinical exposure at the Rosa Parks Medical Center in the following departments: Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Medicine, and Pediatrics. I connected calls to staff, maintained “high-touch” areas, and assisted low-mobility patients. I also helped feed them and helped them with other daily tasks. This role taught me what working in a Trauma 1 hospital is like. I also enjoyed working with the patients and listening to their stories.

This program provided me with clinical exposure at the Rosa Parks Medical Center in the following departments: Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Medicine, and Pediatrics. While I connected calls to staff, maintained “high-touch” areas and assisted low-mobility patients, I learned most when interacting with patients more intimately, feeding them, hearing their experiences and my favorite, passing their time with card magic. Over time, I began to better understand what it meant to be a patient with acute or chronic disease. Working in a Trauma 1 hospital showed me many components of day-to-day medicine: the teamwork, red tape, long hours and above all, the satisfaction this field provides.

695 characters

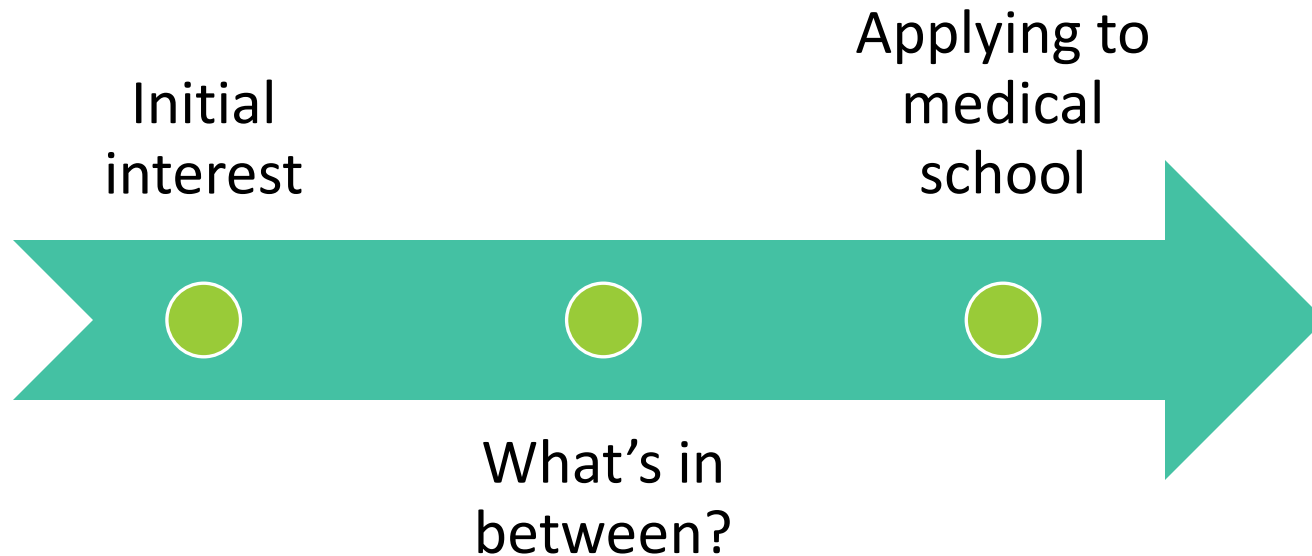
GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME

1. Meet up with the blank page and don't wait until you get "the perfect, fully formed, idea."
2. Just get started, and you will find that your ideas will emerge and develop by having given yourself the time.
3. Don't write to the character limit. Find out what you want to say. Early drafts help you clarify what you want to say.
4. Early drafts can be "bad" but important for forming your ideas and moving you forward. So therefore, they are GOOD.
5. Notice what ideas/content generate a spark of emotion



You just have to start somewhere

Don't Panic: You already have ideas



Some questions you can ask: Why Medicine/Dental/Veterinary for YOU?

What shadowing experiences have been most meaningful to you, and why?

What volunteer/community service experiences have been most meaningful to you, and why?

If you have experience with patients, what has been most meaningful and why?

What academic or research experiences have been most meaningful to you, and why?

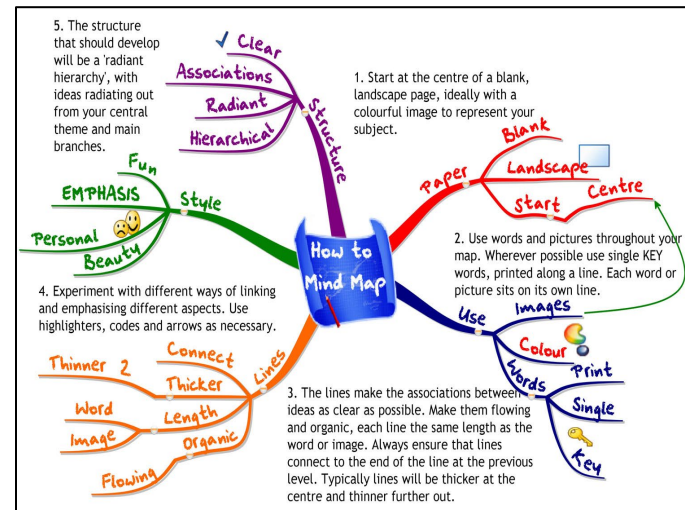
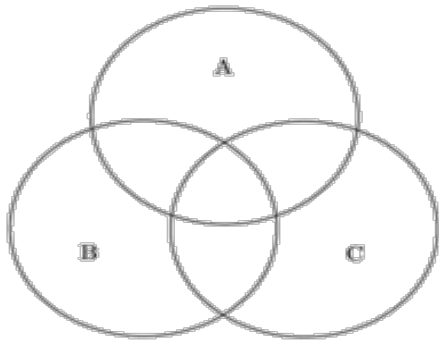
What service, leadership, or extracurricular activities most meaningful to you, and why?

Ways to Brainstorm

A venn diagram of your 3 most meaningful experiences (or others)

A concept map

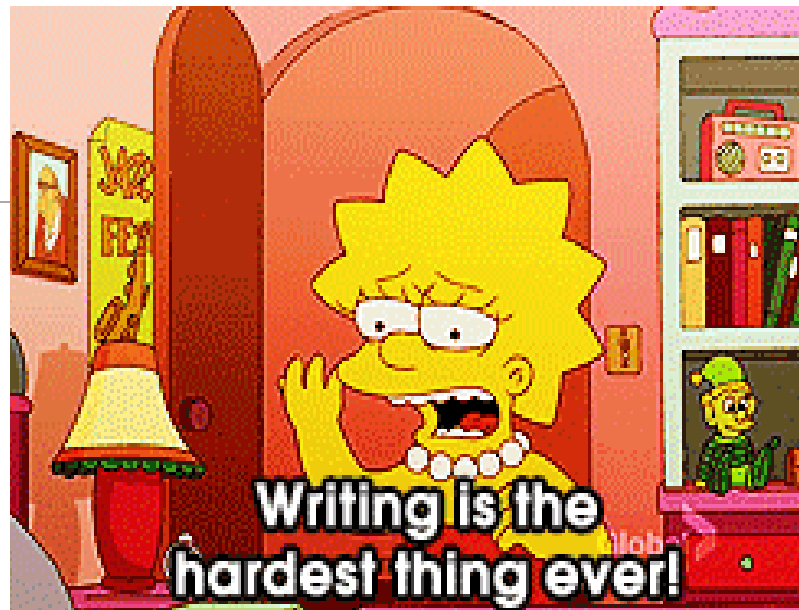
A conversation with an HPP adviser or a friend/family member



More brainstorming questions

- Try using chronology for discovery (though not necessarily how you structure your essay).
- Describe some of your personal characteristics/qualities, consider how some of them are also skills. How might be part of what would make you a successful doctor.
- What healthcare experiences have been meaningful to you?
- When have you felt like “other”
- How will you contribute to the diversity of your cohort?
- Describe a time when you failed at something, and how did you go through that experience.
- When have you experienced adversity and how did you go through it?
- When have you been resilient?
- What touches you, moves you, makes you laugh?
- When have you been affected by others you have encountered; when has your humanity been touched, evolved.
- **Remember--what’s been pivotal to YOU might have been apparently small moments, but for some reason were meaningful to YOU. That is what is important. Big or small, what is True for you?

You'll have
moments like this



And, You'll have moments like this

