



Personal Statements & Job Application Essays

- Show – don't tell!
 - This is by far the most important thing we can do!
 - This means not just saying who you are and what you have done, but demonstrating.

- Be specific.
 - General phrases are vague, and could have been written by anyone.
 - Describing specifically what you've done and what you've learned breathes life into your writing – now it will speak with your unique voice.

- Keep it recent.
 - Avoid mentioning (or if you must mention, avoid dwelling on) events and experiences that occurred earlier than the last 4 years.
 - Although it may seem like you were meant to be a doctor since you were five years old, the reviewing committee doesn't want 5-year-olds in med school. Focus on the person you are now, and the recent experiences that have made you that person.

- Give yourself room to breathe in early drafts.
 - Always write more to begin with: it is easier to trim a rich, expansive piece of writing than beef up a lean, skimpy one.
 - Write as if you're writing in a journal that only you will see, not to a scary review committee. Again, you can always edit your tone to be more formal later, but it will be harder to inject enthusiasm into a dry piece of writing.

If this sounds like you...	Try this in your writing...
<p>“This is totally different from what I’ve done before.”</p> <p>“My experiences have been really varied – how do I make them organized and coherent?”</p>	<p><i>Selection:</i> describe how exploring these other options and ultimately choosing not to continue with each has made you sure of what you are about to do now.</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i> pick one part (e.g., skill) from each experience and describe how they come together to suit the new goal you’re aspiring to.</p>
<p>“When I read through, it feels like a list and not a story.”</p> <p>“I’m afraid of leaving out something important if I don’t talk about everything.”</p>	<p><i>Highlighting:</i> which of the things you list gets you the most excited? Focus on this one alone as the best example.</p> <p><i>Reorganization:</i> consider moving certain experiences from your statement to your resume or other materials you’re submitting.</p>
<p>“I feel like I have to explain why I’m not doing something else.”</p> <p>“I do care about this position, but one of my main motivations is money/the trip to Europe/another line on my resume/not knowing what else to do.”</p>	<p><i>Tone Change:</i> don’t defend your choices – motivate them. When you find a sentence that’s defensive or explanatory, edit the wording so you’re focusing on the positive, exciting side.</p> <p><i>Motivation:</i> it’s not unusual to be driven by many motives, some of which you wouldn’t want to say to a reviewer’s face. Step away from your draft and revisit the experiences that have excited you about this topic either privately on paper or in conversation with a friend, family member, or Writing Studio consultant can help you rediscover your finest motivations.</p>