

One of the most common problems with application essays is that their authors have not sufficiently thought about what their reasons are for applying to the program to which they have decided to apply. At the writing studio I have consulted many students who were in the process of writing AMCAS essays, and their underdeveloped reasons were able to convey little more than:

**“I want to help people and I’m
good at science”**

Despite being underdeveloped it accomplishes two things:

- 1. It conveys that one has both noble and personal reasons.**
- 2. It shows one has specified one's goals in terms of one's skills and has created a coherent life plan.**

Motivating Reasons:

1. Show drive and perseverance

Noble Reasons:

1. Speak to your character as an exceptional person.
2. Make your reader want to like you and identify with you.
3. Suggest that you are responsive to the needs of other people.
4. Show you have good judgment.

Noble and personal reasons don't have to be separate.

**Compassionate people are naturally motivated
to do the right thing.**

Is this you?

Here is an example:

What applicant says:

“Dr. Nelson, the general practitioner for whom I volunteered for two and a half years, had always told me that the desire to become a doctor must come from deep within.”

What applicant means:

Deep motivation is important to make it as a doctor.

What applicant says:

“My experience with Paul and other AIDS patients led me to re-commit to a career as a physician — the only career I want to pursue — but a physician who will always have a minute to comfort.

Yes, my research is exciting and important.

Yes, medicine involves problem solving and analysis of symptoms as I learned at the Family Clinic. And yes, medicine frequently involves clinical approximation as Dr. Nelson taught me. But more than any of the above, as I learned at the AIDS hospice, medicine requires compassion and caring.”

What applicant means:

Compassion is a powerful motivator.

Sometimes personal motivations don't make for the best reasons.

**Just because we are motivated doesn't mean
we have good judgment.**

Here is an example:

What applicant says:

“The years of running ... have taught me discipline and perseverance. These qualities will help me cross a different finish line and achieve a new goal: becoming a doctor.”

What applicant means:

I am a motivated person and motivation is needed to become a doctor.

What applicant says:

“Difficulties have tested my commitment. In September 1992, at the beginning of the running season I developed a severe case of mono. My doctors advised me to drop out of school for a semester and not run for at least four months. Though devastated, I refused to give up. I managed to keep up with all my classes, even when I came down with pneumonia on top of mono in early November. I resumed training in the beginning of December, two months earlier than doctors originally thought possible.”

What applicant means:

My own wants and desires dictate what I do to the point where I ignore my reasons for doing what I really ought to do (reasons like medical advice).

One can also specify one's goals in terms of one's skills and show that one has created a coherent life plan.

Here is an example of an author who shows how her anthropology major combines with her desire to be doctor:

Crayfish tails in tarragon butter, galantine of rabbit with foie gras, oxtail in red wine, and apple tartelletes. The patient had this rich meal and complained of “liver upset“ (crise de foie). Why a *liver* ache? I always associate indigestion with a stomach ache. In studying French culture in my Evolutionary Psychology class, I learned that when experiencing discomfort after a rich meal, the French assume their liver is the culprit. Understanding and dealing with the minor — sometimes major — cultural differences is a necessity in our shrinking world and diverse American society. Anthropology has prepared me to effectively communicate with an ethnically diverse population. My science classes, research, and clinical experience have prepared me to meet the demands of medical school...

Anthropology is the study of humans; medicine is the science and art dealing with the maintenance of health and the prevention, alleviation, or cure of disease in humans. From my work at UMC and my observation of my father’s practice, I know medicine will allow me to pursue an art and science that is tremendously gratifying and contributes to the welfare of those around me. My anthropology classes have taught me to appreciate cross-cultural perspectives and their relationship to pathology and its etiology. First hand experience with exercise therapy and nutrition has taught me the invaluable role of prevention. Medical school will now provide me with the technical knowledge to alleviate a *crise de foie*.