

**The Pre-Med Guide to  
Writing A Strong Primary  
Medical School Application**

---

By: Halimat Olaniyan

Copy Right © 2020 by Halimat Olaniyan

All rights reserved. No parts of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

[www.ChasingMedicine.org](http://www.ChasingMedicine.org)

---

This journal belongs to

---

Note From the Author: The examples in this journal are from my own personal statement and activities. Of course, my application is not perfect and should not be seen as the end all be all. It simply serves as a model and maybe a little inspiration in writing your own.

---

<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Reflective Prompts &amp; Sample Essays</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The First Draft</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Second Draft</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Third Draft</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Activities: The Most Meaningful</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Making a Theme: Tie it All Together</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Additional Examples</b>	<b>67</b>

---

# ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

## WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT'S NOT

- **A guide to help you avoid common mistakes**
- **A toolbox filled with models and examples**
- **A compilation of tips and strategies**
- **A journal for writing inspiration**
- **An aid to help you eloquently express your WHY**
- **An ace in preparing your primary application**
- **It is NOT a guide to guaranteed acceptances**
- **It is NOT a promise to a successful application**
- **It is NOT a certified how to manual**

## HOW TO USE

- **Keep this journal with you for when inspiration strikes**
- **Use the reflective prompts to keep the ideas flowing**
- **Follow the formats and tips**
- **Pace yourself, make edits, accept having multiple drafts**

## NOTES

**There is not one perfect guide to medical school admissions. This guide exists to help you narrate your story in a way that gets the message across to admissions teams.**

Reflective Prompts & Sample Essays

---

# MISCONCEPTIONS

## WHAT A PERSONAL STATEMENT "SHOULD" BE

- About one trans-formative event
- Focused on health and family
- One scene throughout the story
- nOT a recapitulation of your resume
- You proving you've done what you're supposed to
- Filled with inspirational moments
- Should: Describe events that lead you to medicine
- Should: Describe more than one salient experience
- Should: Focus on YOU

## THE SALIENT EXPERIENCE

Your **WHY** shouldn't be centered on just one thing. Maybe it did start with a trans-formative experience but think about all the other things that continue to lead you on a path to medicine. It's all about the **JOURNEY**.

## THOSE WHO INSPIRED YOU

The focus of your personal statement should be **YOU**. Don't spend too much time talking about other people. It's okay to mention how your parents are doctors or how your family's health issues are part of your why, but this is **YOUR** story.

# GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

## START WITH A VIVID INTRODUCTION

- **ENGAGING** style for the win!
- Use descriptive, vivid text to paint the scene.
  
- **ACTIVE** tense is the best!
- Stay **CONSISTENT** with your use of tense.
  
- Take the readers back to the beginning of your story.
- If your intro starts as a flashback then make that clear in your transition between tenses (i.e. I remember when...)
- Be direct and avoid using adjectives unnecessarily (avoid "really" and "very")
  
- Focus on **YOU**.
- Maybe your interest in medicine started with your family, that's fine to talk about it but make sure you talk more about **YOU** than them.

## EXAMPLE

**My back went from aching to throbbing ruthlessly. My hips were stiff. Every step felt like a jolting stab as I walked to my elementary school's nursing office only to be rushed to the emergency room.**

## YOUR TURN

# WHY MEDICINE?

## WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

- **The 3-Pronged Approach**
- **It's always a good idea to have more than 1 reason you want to be a doctor. This will help you with interviews too.**
  1. **One reason might be familial - e.g. because your parents are doctors**
  2. **Another reason should be related to something about medicine as a career - e.g. working in a team or advancing scientific discovery**
  3. **The last reason HAS to be PERSONAL - e.g. something you believe medicine has to offer you (or vice versa) that no other field can.**
- **Why do you want to be a physician?**
- **A lot of schools see medicine as a broad field that includes nursing, physician assistants, dentistry, and much more. Make sure you have a specific reason for wanting to be a PHYSICIAN.**

## EXAMPLE

**Reflecting on my first hospitalization, I felt empowered to be for future patients the positive role model I desperately searched for as a child. My journey has shown me that the world needs empathy, compassion, and better communication in addition to cures.**

## YOUR TURN

# THE WELL ROUNDED APPLICANT

## WHAT HAVE YOU DONE OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE?

- **Diverse experiences**
  - **Make sure you leave room to talk about interests you have outside of medicine**
  - **You want to show that you've taken the time to explore other options but medicine is still the most compelling path for you**
  - **Choose to talk about the extraordinary (as in other than shadowing, volunteering, or research) experiences you have and how they have shaped your decision to pursue medicine or how what you hope to do with a career in medicine**
  - **Don't over stretch - talking about hobbies is great but you don't want to spend more than a few sentences on subjects unrelated to your why**
- 
- **Tie it back!**
  - **When you can, tie your non-medical experiences back to your WHY**
  - **Talk about how the skills you gained and experiences you have outside of medicine can serve you in medical school or at any point in your medical journey**

## EXAMPLE

**As an editor and writer, I wrote of having sickle cell, being African American, and the intersection of my identities. I had to edit stories that were not mine to tell in a way that was sensitive but direct. Some of the stories were emotionally jarring to read but have prepared me to hear patient stories and share difficult news.**

## YOUR TURN

# WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE

HOW DO YOU STAND APART FROM THE REST?

- **Standing out in a sea of applicants**
- **Yes, there are certain things all applicants are expected to have in common - drive, empathy, service - but they are not expected to have gained those characteristics in the same way**
- **What avenues have you explored that are not so traditional - maybe you had a completely different career or major before deciding you wanted to go to medical school**
  
- **Background stories matter**
- **Your background (race, ethnicity, heritage, family) could be what sets you apart - e.g. how were you raised, where did you grow up, if you're the first in your family to pursue medicine or higher education - all of this is part of what makes you unique**
  
- **Conventional is okay too**
- **Even if you think you're the traditional applicant, there's bound to be at least one experience you've had that most others haven't - e.g. traveling and serving abroad, being part of a military family, living with your grandparents**

## EXAMPLE

**My experiences living with a chronic illness have given me a unique perspective on the healthcare system and have shown me the importance of communication and health advocacy.**

## YOUR TURN

# MISSION STATEMENT

## WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

- **Sum it all up**
- **Think of your mission statement as your thesis sentence**
- **It can be a brief introduction to what your personal statement is going to be about (your motivation for pursuing medicine) or the perfect summary sentence for that final paragraph**
  
- **Wanting to help people isn't enough**
- **Admissions teams assume you enjoy helping people, but that doesn't equal wanting to be a physician**
- **There are so many ways in and outside of the field of medicine that you can help people**
  
- **Be specific and purposeful**
- **What is that your path to accomplishing the goals you have for yourself and the path to becoming a doctor have in common?**
- **If the reader was only going to take away one sentence, one point, from your personal statement, what would you want them to remember?**

## EXAMPLE

**I plan to continue combating stigma with my story and serving as a positive role model to show other kids that they too can accomplish anything they aspire to. My mission is to improve access to and delivery of care for marginalized patients by enhancing patient-provider communication.**

## YOUR TURN

# AUTHOR'S PERSONAL STATEMENT

My back went from aching to throbbing ruthlessly. My hips were stiff. Every step felt like a jolting stab as I walked to my elementary school's nursing office only to be rushed to the emergency room. I was hospitalized and diagnosed with sickle cell anemia as a 7-year old girl. The pain I felt and week I spent in the hospital resulted in despondence, defeat and sadness. The invisibility I felt in academic and hospital settings only made matters worse. Non-specialty providers often struggled to communicate how sickle cell impacted or caused the symptoms I presented or to coordinate my diagnosis with my treatment. I lacked a positive example of someone living and thriving with sickle cell disease. After two hospitalizations, I was convinced the only solution to my feelings of isolation was to be cured of my disease. I felt that sickle cell was presented to me by society as a monolith—a disease that kills all of its patients by mid-life. Throughout the following seven years and the next four hospitalizations, I found myself begging to return to school instead of succumbing to the expectations of my illness and waiting for a cure. I realized I could accomplish anything I set my mind to, and I began my journey to medicine.

Having sickle cell has given me skills no textbook can teach: empathy, resilience, and compassion. During one shadowing experience, I connected with a patient who had extreme swelling around her ankles but insisted on returning to work even with her pain, a situation that I have encountered in the past with preparing for or taking exams while experiencing a pain flare. I found that I was able to use my personal experiences to help identify solutions that work with her lifestyle, such as wearing an ankle brace and sitting more during her lectures. I understand the difficulty of having responsibilities while being limited by significant pain. Once, while volunteering at the children's hospital, I consoled a little boy with sickle cell who felt stuck in the hospital. I was able to share my personal experiences and how I had been able to overcome them. We talked about his aspirations and I watched as his face grew brighter. Reflecting on my first hospitalization, I felt empowered to be for future patients the positive role model I desperately searched for as a child. My journey has shown me that the world needs empathy, compassion, and better communication in addition to cures.

## NOTE: MAKING A THEME

Throughout the examples, notice the author maintains a theme of service and advocacy. Her passion is strongly tied to her personal experiences and every example she shares further ties back to this theme.

## The First Draft

---

# AUTHOR'S PERSONAL STATEMENT

Throughout my undergraduate education, I have integrated my experience with sickle cell into my writing, research, and advocacy work. I started by writing for the school newspaper and later seized the opportunity to design and implement my own research project to see how information is disseminated from sickle cell researchers and providers to sickle cell patients and the communities in which they live. My team found inadequate distribution of information among providers and patients, and I worked to fill the gap in communication by sharing my insight via oral presentations and engaging in discussions with patients, community members, and providers. I discovered that many patients did not know of the advances in research on sickle cell and that patients value connecting with providers outside of hospital visits. Research taught me the importance of properly disseminating information in a way that benefits the affected populations. When given the chance to speak to medical students on my personal experience and perspective as a patient, I conveyed the significant impact and consequences of living with chronic pain. The emotional reaction of the medical students further reminded me of the importance of being involved in health system issues and sharing my story.

Growing up with sickle cell has shown me the significance of representation. I had no example of someone with sickle cell succeeding in their career or pursuing medicine. So, I leaped at the chance to co-chair the first Future Physicians Summit, an event that exposed marginalized youth to medicine with the goal of strengthening the pipeline of underrepresented minorities choosing a career in medicine. As a child, I was bombarded with negative stereotypes. My success in overcoming the adversity I faced is the product of my drive, support system, and other resources that not all kids have. I plan to continue combating stigma with my story and serving as a positive role model to show other kids that they too can accomplish anything they aspire to. My mission is to improve access to and delivery of care for marginalized patients by enhancing patient-provider communication.

My experiences living with a chronic illness have given me a unique perspective on the healthcare system and have shown me the importance of communication and health advocacy. I aspire to actively improve the system from a medical education, policy, and practice standpoint. As a medical student, I will continue sharing my perspective through advocacy avenues, working with my fellow medical school class to build empathy for patients, and developing more initiatives like the Future Physicians Summit. As a physician, I can serve as a role model, advocate, writer, researcher, public speaker, and innovator, by drawing on a lifetime of experience with sickle cell disease

# C.E.E.

Paragraph Style

## Traditional C.E.E.

You've probably heard of C.E.E. paragraph style.

- Claim
- Evidence
- Explanation

It's a common style used for evidence-based, debate, or argumentative essays.

Example:

- C: I will become a doctor.
- E: I am applying to medical school.
- E: Medical school is the only step between me and my M.D.

It's not exactly that simple but that just about covers it - and hopefully serves as some more motivation for you

## E is for Example

In our version of C.E.E. the second E is for example.

Start off with whatever claim you want to make - typically a characteristic or skill you want to show admissions teams you have.

Next, give them an example of a time you developed or enhanced that character trait.

Finally, explain. Elaborate on what you gained or learned from that experience and how it furthers your mission.

## Example

Having sickle cell has given me skills no textbook can teach: empathy, resilience, and compassion. During one shadowing experience, I connected with a patient who had extreme swelling around her ankles but insisted on returning to work even with her pain, a situation that I have encountered in the past with preparing for or taking exams while experiencing a pain flare. I found that I was able to use my personal experiences to help identify solutions that work with her lifestyle.

# QUICK TIPS

## Personal Statement

Goal: Create a VIVID, descriptive story of WHY you CONTINUE to choose medicine.

### DO

Be specific

Be concise

Be direct/explicit

Use active tense

Use I statements

Use specific examples

### SHOW

### DON ' T

Be redundant

Be too wordy

Be indirect/implicit

Use alternating tenses

Use general we/us

Use cliches

List off your resume

### GENERAL EXAMPLE:

I was interested in that, so I decided to pursue it.

### MORE CONCISE:

My interest in patient contact led me to pursue social research.

### MORE INDIRECT:

Due to an interest in patient contact, I pursued social research.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHY MEDICINE

**What first interested you in medicine?**

**When did it happen?**

**What were you doing?**

**TIP: Use descriptive details to paint an image.  
Don't just tell us, show us!**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

WHY CONTINUED



**What has happened since to keep you interested in medicine?**



**Give a specific example.**



**What specifically attracts you to medicine over other health fields?**



**Give a specific example.**



**How do your interests line up with the field of medicine?**

# Personal Statement

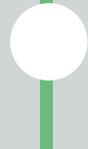
DATE

DRAFT

## MEDICAL EXPERIENCES



**What exposure/experiences have you had in the field of medicine?**



**What have you learned about medicine?**



**What would you like to change about medicine?**



**What impact do you want to have on the field?**



**How will you have this impact?**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE



**What interests do you have outside of medicine?**

**How have you explored these interests?**

**How can you tie the skills you've gained from non-medical experiences back to medicine?**

**What will you do with these skills in the future? As a medical student/physician?**

**TIP: Sometimes that hobby you have that is not at all related to medicine is what the admissions team connects with. Don't forget to tie back to your WHY.**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER



**What unique perspective or experiences do you have to offer?**



**How will you engage with your medical peers?**



**How do you add to your future med class' diversity of thought/experience/background?**



**What makes you uniquely different?**



**TIP: Admissions teams want to know why they should pick you over everyone else. Show them how you stand apart from the rest.**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## MISSION STATEMENT



**What do you ultimately hope to gain from a career in medicine?**

**What is your life goal?**

**Why is medicine the only or best way to accomplish your goals?**

**What is your plan of action?**

**TIP: Think of your mission statement as the sentence that sums up your WHY.**

## The Second Draft

---

# QUICK TIPS

## Between Drafts

Goal: Get feedback from a diverse pool of people you trust.

### TIP

Take a break!

Ask for edits

Ask writers/editors

Ask doctors

Ask non-medicine people

Ask specific questions

### CONSIDER

Fresh eyes for each review

Make sure others understand

Helps to have experience

Not too far removed

Admissions teams

Get the right point across

### Beware of over editing!

Every time you look at your personal statement you'll probably find something to improve, but at some point you have to let it go and decide it's ready to submit.

### Dangers of too much advice.

People are going to have different opinions and edits for your personal statement, which is what you want. You have to decide what opinions and edits you agree with and which ones to ignore. Advice from doctors is great but remember a lot has changed since when they applied for medical school. At the end of the day it's YOUR story. Don't lose yourself to the feedback.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHY MEDICINE

**What first interested you in medicine?**

**When did it happen?**

**What were you doing?**

**TIP: Use descriptive details to paint an image.  
Don't just tell us, show us!**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

WHY CONTINUED



**What has happened since to keep you interested in medicine?**



**Give a specific example.**



**What specifically attracts you to medicine over other health fields?**



**Give a specific example.**



**How do your interests line up with the field of medicine?**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## MEDICAL EXPERIENCES



**What exposure/experiences have you had in the field of medicine?**



**What have you learned about medicine?**



**What would you like to change about medicine?**



**What impact do you want to have on the field?**



**How will you have this impact?**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE



What interests do you have outside of medicine?

How have you explored these interests?

How can you tie the skills you've gained from non-medical experiences back to medicine?

What will you do with these skills in the future? As a medical student/physician?

**TIP:** Sometimes that hobby you have that is not at all related to medicine is what the admissions team connects with. Don't forget to tie back to your **WHY**.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER



**What unique perspective or experiences do you have to offer?**



**How will you engage with your medical peers?**



**How do you add to your future med class' diversity of thought/experience/background?**



**What makes you uniquely different?**



**TIP: Admissions teams want to know why they should pick you over everyone else. Show them how you stand apart from the rest.**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## MISSION STATEMENT



**What do you ultimately hope to gain from a career in medicine?**

**What is your life goal?**

**Why is medicine the only or best way to accomplish your goals?**

**What is your plan of action?**

**TIP: Think of your mission statement as the sentence that sums up your WHY.**

The Third Draft

---

# QUICK TIPS

Goal: To avoid being stuck on the same idea, paragraph, or draft.

## Between Drafts

PAUSE

REFLECT

### Too many drafts?

It is highly unlikely your first draft will be your only draft. Your first few drafts may even tell completely different stories. What's important is to make each draft better than the last.

Make sure you're giving yourself enough time between drafts to truly reflect on previous drafts and edits. Try printing out your personal statement, reading it to yourself or family aloud, or just not looking at it for a few days. This way you come back to writing with a fresh take. Plus, we catch more editing mistakes when we read things on paper than on a screen.

Use the space above to jot down things you want to keep or change in your next draft.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHY MEDICINE

**What first interested you in medicine?**

**When did it happen?**

**What were you doing?**

**TIP: Use descriptive details to paint an image.  
Don't just tell us, show us!**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

WHY CONTINUED



**What has happened since to keep you interested in medicine?**



**Give a specific example.**



**What specifically attracts you to medicine over other health fields?**



**Give a specific example.**



**How do your interests line up with the field of medicine?**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## MEDICAL EXPERIENCES



**What exposure/experiences have you had in the field of medicine?**



**What have you learned about medicine?**



**What would you like to change about medicine?**



**What impact do you want to have on the field?**



**How will you have this impact?**

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE

What interests do you have outside of medicine?

How have you explored these interests?

How can you tie the skills you've gained from non-medical experiences back to medicine?

What will you do with these skills in the future? As a medical student/physician?

**TIP:** Sometimes that hobby you have that is not at all related to medicine is what the admissions team connects with. Don't forget to tie back to your **WHY**.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER

What unique perspective or experiences do you have to offer?

How will you engage with your medical peers?

How do you add to your future med class' diversity of thought/experience/background?

What makes you uniquely different?

**TIP:** Admissions teams want to know why they should pick you over everyone else. Show them how you stand apart from the rest.

# Personal Statement

DATE

DRAFT

## MISSION STATEMENT



**What do you ultimately hope to gain from a career in medicine?**

**What is your life goal?**

**Why is medicine the only or best way to accomplish your goals?**

**What is your plan of action?**

**TIP: Think of your mission statement as the sentence that sums up your WHY.**

Activities Section

---

# ACTIVITIES

## Pyramid Paragraph Style

### Most Meaningful Activities

#### First Paragraph:

**First 1-2 Sentences MAX:** Explain what the activity was.

**Next 2-3 Sentences:** Describe what YOUR role was.

#### Second Paragraph:

**First 1-2 Sentences:** Describe what SPECIFICALLY makes this activity a most meaningful.

**Next 2-3 Sentences:** WHY it was meaningful. What did you learn /gain/witness that impacted you. Add a specific example.

**Last 1-2 Sentences:** SO WHAT. How did/does this continue to push or otherwise prepare you on your journey to medicine.

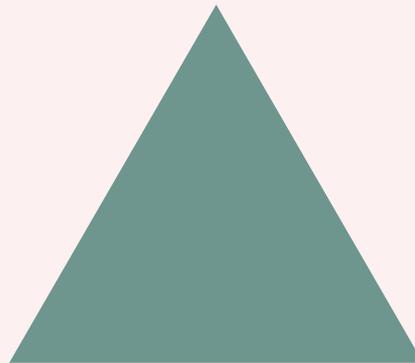
### General Format

**First 1-2 Sentences MAX:** What the activity was/what you did.

**Next 2-3 Sentences:** WHY it was meaningful. What did you learn/gain/witness that impacted you. Add a specific example.

**Last 1-2 Sentences:** SO WHAT. How did/does this continue to push or otherwise prepare you on your journey to medicine.

### Short and Concise



Spend the least amount of time listing what happened and more time SHOWING WHY it impacted you and HOW it continues to shape your journey to medicine.

# ACTIVITIES

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT SHADOWING

- This is one of the classic must dos
- Admission teams expect you to have spent some time in a hospital setting around physicians - how else would you have any idea what a physician does to know you want to be one too
- Clinical experiences
- Other activities that count towards shadowing hours include real work experience like a previous job in the health field or being a scribe
- How many hours?
- Some schools have requirements for "clinical experience" hours but that tends to include shadowing, volunteering, and other hospital setting related activities
- You don't need to many hours, just enough to show you've spent a decent amount of time exploring the hospital life
- We say around 10 hours or 3 half days of shadowing should work

## EXAMPLE

I have shadowed pediatricians etc. to better understand the diverse field of medicine. My most longitudinal experiences were with ... in the hematology department of the cancer center at Michigan Medicine. Over several patient interactions, I met other individuals with sickle cell disease that varied in pain management and degree of symptoms. I witnessed different levels of medical need and I learned how patients with the same diagnosis can have vastly different prognoses. I also learned the importance of tailoring treatment plans for patients, even among patients with the same diagnosis.

## YOUR TURN

# ACTIVITIES

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

- This is another must do, but it doesn't all have to be in a hospital
- There's a wide variety of service opportunities you can do, the more diverse the better!
- Of course, some of it should probably be in a hospital - admissions teams want to know you've spent a good amount of time in hospital settings, makes sense
- The more passionate you are about the volunteering you do, the better you'll be able to talk about it
  
- Mix it up!
- Try different volunteer experiences until you find one you like to get those volunteering hours
  
- How many hours?
- Not all schools have exact hour requirements for volunteering, but the more, the better

## EXAMPLE

I volunteered on the general and hematology/oncology floors. I was responsible for keeping the environment clean, alleviating caregivers, and being a companion for patients. I gained bedside manners and learned how to interact with babies, toddlers, and teenagers. I was surprised to find that many patients spent most of their days alone, because my mom always stayed in the hospital with me. By spending time with these patients, I witnessed the importance of volunteering and the difference I was making. On the hematology floor, I was exposed to death and learned that grief is part of what makes us human. I was inspired by the resilience of the chronically ill children that I worked with.

## YOUR TURN

# ACTIVITIES

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT RESEARCH

- **To do or not to do**
- **You can never go wrong with having research experience - as long as you know how to talk about it**
- **Doing research just because you feel like you have to is not the best idea - admissions teams can tell if you're not passionate about something and will ask**
  
- **Choose wisely**
- **Find research that speaks to your interests - explore the topics you care about so when the time comes you have a lot to say**
- **It doesn't have to be bench work, you don't need to be published as the first author, focus on the act of discovery and the rest will follow**
  
- **For the activities section**
- **Leave the super specific details and medical jargon behind**
- **Not everyone who reads your personal statement will have a research heavy background or medical background**
- **Focus on what you gained and learned from the experience**

## EXAMPLE

First, I researched child passenger safety in Michigan. We analyzed the distribution and use of car seat inspection stations. My work collecting and cleaning data was integral to completion of the project and published report. Next, I did social research on sickle cell disease by conducting literature reviews, attending local and regional meetings, and engaging in the community. My team found a gap in communication among patients and providers. Presenting at the undergraduate research symposium enhanced my confidence in public speaking and ability to convey information in a meaningful way. I also gained interpersonal skills applicable to future teamwork settings with my medical class.

## YOUR TURN

# QUICK TIPS

## Activities

Goal: To SHOW how your experiences have prepared you and motivate you to choose medicine.

DEFINITELY

MAYBE

### Not enough activities?

You do NOT have to have 15 activities. The point is not to give them a resume of all the things you've ever done but to show the experiences that have lead you and keep pushing you towards medicine.

It's okay if that's only 5 activities or exactly 15. Don't try to forces it. Pick the activities that really mean something to you and that you have a lot to say about, because they will ask about them during interviews.

Most importantly, don't fake it! Don't put down an activity just because you think you should. Use the space above to jot down activities and rank the ones you want to talk about.

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

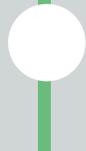
IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**



**What did you do?**



**What did you learn?**



**How did it impact you?**



**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**



**What did you do?**



**What did you learn?**



**How did it impact you?**



**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**



**What did you do?**



**What did you learn?**



**How did it impact you?**



**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

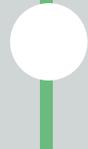
DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**



**What did you do?**



**What did you learn?**



**How did it impact you?**



**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**



**What did you do?**



**What did you learn?**



**How did it impact you?**



**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Activities

DATES

HOURS

IN 5 EASY STEPS



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

Activities Section: The Most Meaningful

---

# SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

## EXPANDING ON THE MOST MEANINGFUL

I am heavily involved in the sickle cell community. I was a cabin leader at North Star Reach's Sickle and Blood week of summer camp. For five days, I was responsible for the wellbeing and entertainment of five 8- to 9-year-old girls. I witnessed how children process and deal with having a chronic illness. I have participated in the Annual Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Walk for the past two years. I went from just attending the walk to orchestrating a team and working with the director to promote and fundraise for the event. I had a role in Advocacy Day, in which sickle cell patients, caretakers, and providers spend the day at Michigan's Capitol Building advocating for disease awareness.

During Advocacy Day, I had the privilege of speaking to sickle cell patients and providers about my life with sickle cell, specifically my success as a student and my plans to become a physician. I remember standing in the rotunda as the audience told me how moved and inspired they were by my story. I witnessed how strong the sickle cell community is and the importance of representation. I also collected funds and photographs for the High Five for Sickle Cell campaign, which encourages participants to learn five facts about sickle cell that emphasize that people are coping with this disease, and lobbied congress to pass or edit bills for the benefit of the sickle cell community. I learned how to mobilize support and the importance of having congressmen as allies. I also discovered that bills on policies intended to limit opioid misuse also hinder sickle cell patients' ability to get their medications. I learned how policies can unintentionally harm already marginalized communities and the importance of proactively considering all the potential consequences of any bill. I intend to continue my involvement in health policy as a medical student.

### NOTE

This activity ties back to the authors vivid introduction and elaborates on how she's explored other avenues related to her mission of service.

# SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

## EXPANDING ON THE MOST MEANINGFUL

The goal of the summit was to expose middle and high school students from marginalized backgrounds to careers in healthcare, while strengthening the pipeline of marginalized backgrounds entering or already in the field of medicine. The students participated in a day of activities such as a college readiness game, pipeline panel, clinical skills sessions, and a mission and vision workshop. My co-chair and I organized leadership meetings and oversaw the complete planning, implementation, and subsequent research of the event. We also participated in the preparation and presentation of our work at Health Professionals Education day, a research symposium across all health departments at Michigan.

This was the first time I participated in all aspects of bringing an idea to life, from its conception to working on ways to improve the event for next year. I was involved in the poster proposal, creation and presenting it to faculty and graduate students. Planning the summit involved partnering with small businesses, undergraduate students, medical students and faculty. The best part of the summit was watching the middle and high school students start to believe in themselves. Most had never considered a career in healthcare or imagined they could become physicians. They made me realize how important representation and early exposure are. I grew determined to help the students who attended in anyway that I can and continue to serve as role model for underrepresented youth. I left the day with a solid idea of what I want to contribute to medicine and knowing that I have the support it takes to succeed as a physician. I also gained a better understanding of how to mobilize partnerships and make multigenerational impact. I plan to continue working with underrepresented populations and planning events to strengthen the pipeline.

### NOTE

This activity ties back to the author's overall theme of representation and service. It also backs up her mission statement with action.

# SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

## EXPANDING ON THE MOST MEANINGFUL

I wrote for the section of the school's newspaper built by and for students of color to talk about their experiences. I began by submitting articles on occasion and later became a senior editor. I wrote of having sickle cell, being African American, and the intersection of my identities. I had to edit stories that were not mine to tell in a way that was sensitive but direct. Some of the stories were emotionally jarring to read but have prepared me to hear patient stories and share difficult news. I learned that people have different reactions to identity-based pieces, and the critiques I received on my own writing have prepared me to face and learn from criticism during my path to medicine.

I had not heard of sickle cell patients writing about their experiences and worried I would face adverse reactions for openly talking about the discrimination and hardships I faced. Instead, I was revered for sharing my story and people thanked me for teaching them about the disease. I got emails from students and faculty thanking me for being so open about having a chronic illness. The most powerful feedback I received followed my performance of my piece at Yoni Ki Baat's annual monologue show by and for women of color to share their stories. I talked about how it feels to be a minority in almost every aspect and how I struggle to find people who can relate. After my performance, a girl in the audience approached me and told me that she connected with my story and shared the feelings I had expressed. The effect I had on her and the potential to affect more people in the future inspires me to keep writing. I learned the importance of sharing my story, how powerful writing is as a means of communication, and different ways to spread a message. I plan to continue writing and speaking on my experiences as a physician.

### NOTE

This activity has just about nothing to do with medicine but again relates to the author's theme of representation and service.

# QUICK TIPS

## Most Meaningful

Goal: Describe what sets apart these activities from the rest. It's all about IMPACT.

### TIP

Choose wisely

Vary the activities

Pick the not so typical

Character count matters

Tie it back

Cohesive stories

### CONSIDER

What you have to say

Redundancy is boring

What others haven't done

Can you say more or less

How does it relate

Consistent timelines

### The time factor.

Spending more time on an activity doesn't necessarily mean or make it seem more meaningful. Admissions teams do look to see how long you participated in every activity but sometimes a one day event can impact you more than a three month project did.

**Tip:** Regrouping activities can be a simple solution. For instance, if you call one activity "volunteering" you can add up the hours for all of the volunteering you've done. Then, you can use the limited character space to talk about the most meaningful volunteer experience you had, even if it was only an hour long.

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

1.1



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

1.2



**What was YOUR specific role?**

**Why does this activity stick out from the rest?**

**What did you learn about yourself?**

**Why is it MEANINGFUL?**

**How does it CONTINUE to push you towards medicine?**

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

2.1



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

2.2



**What was YOUR specific role?**

**Why does this activity stick out from the rest?**

**What did you learn about yourself?**

**Why is it MEANINGFUL?**

**How does it CONTINUE to push you towards medicine?**

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

3.1



**What was it?**

**What did you do?**

**What did you learn?**

**How did it impact you?**

**How will it benefit you in medical school?**

# Most Meaningful

DATES

HOURS

3.2

What was **YOUR** specific role?

Why does this activity stick out from the rest?

What did you learn about yourself?

Why is it **MEANINGFUL**?

How does it **CONTINUE** to push you towards medicine?

**Making a Theme: Tie it All Together**

---

# THEMES

## Connecting the Dots

### Representation & Service

The over arching theme through all of the examples is one of service and representation.

Notice how the author uses her activities and most meaningful activities to further convey that theme.

It's more than just a theme. Her entire personal statement and even mission statement ties back to this theme. Her passion is for serving the under-served and why representation matters is clearly relayed throughout all the aspects of her application.

Think of your theme the genre or tag for your application. It is the common thread between what you have done , what you hope to accomplish, and what you have to say about your journey.

### Healing & Service

For a lot of people, their WHY has to do with wanting to help people. You already know that on its own is not enough, but a theme about wanting to heal and protect the under-served - that's pretty powerful.

This theme can also incorporate service learning, study or research abroad, and any other community focused aspects of your application.

### Research & Discovery

There's a lot of debate on if you need research before applying to medical school. We think it's only truly necessary if you want to go to a research heavy school.

IN that case, this may be the perfect theme for you. You can talk all about previous research experiences and what you hope to discover next or how you plan to advance the field.

# Make a Theme

DATES

HOURS

TIE IT ALL BACK

What is the common thread in your story?

How do your activities show who you are?

What is your **THEME**?

**Creating a Theme: The best primary application ties every component back to your WHY. Consider how your personal statement and activities come together to tell one cohesive story. Tie it back to your mission**

**Example Theme: Serving the Under Served**

Additional Examples: Personal Statement Samples

---

## SAMPLE 1

Growing up, the hospital was all I knew. After my father died when I was four months old, my mother filled the roles of caretaker and mentor. Frequently, my mother brought me to her work at the hospital because childcare was unavailable. I was consistently in awe watching physicians and nurses interact with patients. I aspired to have the same knowledge, confidence, and passion as them. Consequently, I began to pursue medicine with my mother's support; however, I did not realize her impact on my personal growth until she left my home state to finish her nursing doctorate while I was in high school. Her perseverance and resilience provided me a foundation to develop the independence required to take care of myself, my pets, the house, the car, and continue my pursuit of becoming a physician. My studies and early exposure to healthcare emphasized the importance of biological factors. However, my life experiences broadened my understanding. During my junior year of high school, I volunteered to take care of my uncle who had recently been diagnosed with cancer. He was provided with social support in the same loving and stable environment that my mother gave me. I accompanied him when he went to his doctor's appointments and filled his prescriptions. No matter how bleak the outcome seemed, my uncle went to bed with a full stomach and a happy memory of the day.

Due to being the primary caretaker of my uncle, alongside my experiences with my mother, my dedication to become a physician grew stronger. The experiences with my uncle showed me that healthcare continues well beyond the doctor's office and influences every aspect of an individual's life, such as psychological functioning. To better understand the relationship between health and psychology, I focused my collegiate studies on the psychological sciences. Learning how to anticipate responses improved my communication and interpersonal skills when interacting with patients at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Medical Center. In one case, I visited a patient's room and was immediately greeted with profanities regarding his medical care. When he finished speaking, I informed him that he was not forgotten, but that his healthcare providers were formulating a care plan for him once he left the hospital. He was also reassured that whenever he called the nurse's station, I would come to his room and sit by his side to talk about whatever he wished. The patient regained his composure, and each time he called me into his room, I could tell that this was not a patient who was angry at physicians. He was a man who had gone too long without seeing a genuine, compassionate individual.

## SAMPLE 1

Although my collegiate studies enhanced my understanding of emotional responses, the experience at UCSD introduced me to the patient mentality. I had focused too much on the biological side of medicine, but I was determined to learn more about other components of medical care. For example, my college's Health Inequities Fellowship Program enhanced my understanding of health disparities and barriers to healthcare within the Latino community. Although the town contained an affordable clinic, a majority of the residents did not receive regular check ups, resulting in high rates of the use of emergency services. Cultural barriers, misconceptions, and fear of stereotypes prevented them from accessing healthcare. However, a sense of community was evident when they fought against nearby factory pollution that was affecting their health. In other words, the Health Inequities Fellowship Program, in addition to my volunteering and life experiences, emphasized that health, psychological functioning, and social support influence one another.

In retrospect, my early life was both challenging and rewarding. In conjunction with my healthcare experiences, my mother and my uncle showed me how health influences every aspect of life. Yet, health care typically addresses only the physiological aspects. As a physician, I will attend to each patient's psychological, physiological, and social backgrounds in order to promote comprehensive, positive health outcomes

## SAMPLE 2

My story of wanting to become a doctor is about changes in perspective. Up until the age of six, I believed (like most children) I was invincible. Then one day, after school, a folded-up cafeteria table fell and crushed the skull of one of my classmates, Jarod. I will never forget the way his death sent shock and grief through our small Ohio town. Injury and trauma were very rare where I grew up, never mind something so devastating. Seeing at a young age the way bodies can fail, and the helplessness trauma leaves in its wake, I became inspired to spend life helping those in need. Unfortunately, I also carried with me a deep fear for how fragile the human body could be.

My insecurities were reinforced when my mother's best friend Tracy, a second mother to me, was found to have malignant breast cancer during the first few months of her pregnancy. She chose to delay treatment, placing the life of her daughter above her own survival, and died a few years later when the cancer spread to her brain.

Injury and illness seemed to always have the upper hand in my life. Fortunately, I was driven toward athletics and became interested in health at an early age. With my parents' support, I played as many sports as possible, from basketball to dance. I had hoped to become physically stronger, tougher, impossible to injure. My logic was pretty simple: avoid a weak body by creating a strong one.

Eventually, I discovered a deeper love for soccer, and dedicated myself to it. Entering high school, realistic hopes of a college scholarship began to take shape. Then, after visiting a few colleges my junior year, I decided to pursue Florida State, a school whose biology program I was interested in. My goal was to explore healthcare at the highest level, and I knew soccer could help me get there.

With a scholarship in reach, I began to train more often than ever, running each morning and practicing each night, until soon I was in the best condition of my life, feeling invincible again. Three months later, toward the end of a late-season away game, I must have pivoted too hard up-field, and I tore almost every ligament in my left knee. Any soccer career was shattered, in an instant.

## SAMPLE 2

My knee injury is when I experienced trauma firsthand, and learned I had spent the majority of my life looking at it the wrong way. In fact, I finally had shed the anxiety I carried with me for so long, replacing it with a clear mission to spend my life helping people heal, and feel strong again. I was always concerned with accidents and failures, because I had never seen recoveries or successes.

Not until my experience with rehabilitation, did realize how deeply unproductive and misguided my fears had always been. Here I was, face to face with medical professionals dedicated to helping people overcome trauma, determined to utilize the body's strength and resilience, and all I had ever dwelled on were freak accidents and physiological weak points. Even though it can fail, the body is still the most profound vessel through which life is possible.

Celebrating a new perspective, I began to chase down medical knowledge at every opportunity, and fell in love with everything the human body is capable of. With each new complexity and nuance, I felt reassured, knowing the hours I spent exploring the body's strengths would help me grasp and better prepare for its weaknesses. I knew above all else, I wanted to be an ally against the types of trauma and illness that had darkened the lives of those around me.

Once at Florida State, I quickly set out to become a patient advocate and begin developing my practical lens for medicine. This afforded me an incredible experience with the FSU Medical Response Unit, a group of student volunteers purposed to provide basic life support to students, faculty and staff. The MRU gave me the opportunity to grow not only as a medical professional, but as an individual. During my time there, I was fortunate enough to win the BLS division of a statewide EMS competition (CLINCON), educate future and current responders, and develop a Continuous Quality Improvement program.

I currently work as an emergency care technician at a Level II trauma center, absorbing as much experience and knowledge as I can. Seeing doctors interact with patients and their families, I understand more and more the type of compassionate, competent doctor I hope to become. Each day, my perspective on the body, medicine and physicians continues to grow. Having worked on severe traumas, the emotional strain has taught me how to remain objective and professional while maintaining deep respect and empathy for patients and their families.

## SAMPLE 2

Beyond having a deep desire to help those in need, my drive comes from wanting to be an ally against life's unexpected struggles. I have seen and felt the body's failures, but far more often, proper care and treatment has worked wonders and saved lives around me.

My deepest hope is to become a doctor and join those who have taken an oath as patient advocates – those that don't run away from trauma or illness, but instead make it their mission to understand and treat it. I want to spend my life combining compassion and medical knowledge to make a difference in the lives of those around me.

## SAMPLE 3

I was once ashamed of my past, but I now believe that it has shaped me into the strong and determined person that I am today. After being sexually assaulted, I lost my confidence and had to reforge who I was from a victim into a survivor. Medicine provided solace, inspiration, and a catalyst for me to improve upon myself. My Gynecologist was instrumental in my transition to a survivor. He always believed in me and pushed me to be the best version of myself. Over time, I developed coping tools, such as reflecting on my thoughts in a diary. I found new outlets for my emotions, such as playing board games and volunteering. As a result, I developed a persisting resilience that allowed me to bear significant responsibilities.

When my grandmother fell critically ill and my mother needed to care for her constantly, I assumed the role of the head of our household in fulfilling my mother's responsibilities, including managing the household, caring for my grandfather, and managing her cat rescue. While scribing, I was able to follow a patient who had depression and watched the physician, Dr. DeMarco, treat them and become their support system. Even as that patient talked of suicide, Dr. DeMarco held their hand and valued their existence. I was amazed to see the patient slowly improve to the point of sporting a genuine smile upon their most recent office visit. Through noticing the similarities in the role that physicians played in the patient's improvement and dealing with my own trauma, I am motivated to become a similarly dependable and devoted physician one day.

I am determined to use my coping tools, such as reflection and positive self-talk, to aid others in developing their own in order to effectively manage their health. I have come to realize that physicians must be advocates and pillars of support for their patients. They help patients accept their conditions and empower them to take an active role in their health.

## SAMPLE 3

While shadowing Dr. Aditya Jain, my experience with a Spanish-speaking patient reaffirmed my choice to pursue medicine and inspired me to fight against health disparities. Despite the patient's inability to speak English, Dr. Jain still managed to provide high-quality care. I was in awe of the trust that Dr. Jain was able to instill in his patients as well as the quality of treatment and care he gave, despite communicating only using hand gestures at times. I cherish the nature of being a community physician, how each patient becomes family, and the unbreakable trust that exists between physicians and patients. That trust motivates me to develop and hone skills needed of a physician and improve myself so that patients will trust me in the future. As a first point of contact for many patients, I aspire to be someone that they can trust will go above and beyond in treating them despite the presence of barriers.

While Dr. Jain was figuring out ways to treat the Spanish-speaking patient, I offered to translate, as Spanish is my first language, but I was unable to do so due to legal constraints. I will never forget the frustration I felt that day from not being able to help. Since then, I have worked relentlessly to help immigrants overcome language barriers in health care. As an officer of the Community Health Outreach Project, I created a set of bilingual cards for non-English speaking patients to describe their symptoms to physicians. I also spent some time volunteering in La Clinica de la Raza as a health advocate by teaching Spanish-speaking families about current recommendations for children. I worked with the families in developing customized plans that would fit their personal schedules and re-learned that each family has its own unique trials. As a physician leader, I will advocate for vulnerable communities and encourage my colleagues to rally against disparities.

These experiences have prepared me to persevere through the hard work and daily challenges required to become a physician committed to bettering patients' lives. Life has taught me empathy and coping skills that will help me relate to future patients. It has allowed me to understand how I can improve upon myself. I will work tirelessly to address disparities in access and quality of medical care, especially those created by language barriers.

*Chasing*  
MEDICINE