

WRITING APPLICATION ESSAYS FOR DENTAL SCHOOL

ESSAY FOR THE AADSAS APPLICATION

From your perspective, a dental school essay is an opportunity to:

- Provide subjective non-numerical information to the Admissions Committee.
- Introduce and sell yourself.

From the Admissions Committee's perspective, a dental school essay is:

- An explanation of your career decision process.
- A means to gain insights into your maturity, commitment, etc.
- A sample of your writing ability and self-knowledge.

What can you write about? Start with some sound personal assessment!

- Why do you want to become a dentist? Be as specific and *sincere* as you can
- What experiences have confirmed your career choice?
- Describe your experiences in dentistry and health care as applicable
- What have you learned about *yourself* through these experiences?
- What extra-curricular activities have broadened your horizons?
- How have you demonstrated leadership?
- What skills are you learning in classes and in research that are relevant to the dentistry profession?
- Who have been the most influential people in your life and why?
- What's your background, your values, etc.?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your professors, employers, family members, friends describe you?
- What kind of impact do you want to have on your community?
- In what ways have you already started this process?
- What are your goals for the future?
- What is it that you would like for a dental school to *really* know about you?

Technique: Outline or free writing?

- Outline: organize and prioritize your thoughts; think of examples to substantiate your statements; introduce, develop and close your essay appropriately
- Free writing: 45-60 minutes to brainstorm--don't worry about space limitations; after first draft, look for common themes; start prioritizing information; address a specific topic in each paragraph; strive for continuity and organization of thoughts
- Whatever you do, (1) have a mental picture of your audience as you write and (2) don't second-guess or try to please your audience. Tell *your* story according to *you*!

Do's

- Be sincere; confident but modest; succinct and informative
- Provide *new* information
- Maintain a *positive* approach
- Stress the "how" more than the "what": have a *reflective* vs. a descriptive tone
- Concentrate on your most *recent* experience
- Support information with relevant examples
- Show you are realistic, not naive
- Be mindful of transitions from paragraph to paragraph
- Vary your sentence structure; avoid sequel of sentences starting with I, I, I
- Use active verbs as much as possible
- Proofread your essay carefully
- Have at least two people read your essay and provide feedback

Don'ts

- Don't feel you have to include everything: strive for depth vs. breadth
- Don't focus your entire essay on *one* incident (i.e., a particular patient in a certain dental clinic)
- Don't focus the entire essay on others (i.e., role model)—the focus should be on you
- Don't sacrifice content for creativity—this may be perceived as frivolous or inappropriate
- Don't tell the reader what to do with your application
- Don't make excuses, but state circumstances as appropriate in addressing problems and irregularities
- Don't be melodramatic and avoid emotional appeals
- Don't sound arrogant
- Don't resort to overused phrases and clichés (i.e., “I like people”)
- Don't use quotes if you can avoid it
- Don't use colloquialisms, chatty tone, etc.
- Don't talk generalities and avoid making theoretical points

ESSAYS FOR SECONDARY/SCHOOL SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS**Do's**

- Answer all questions thoroughly (especially, multi-part questions) but respect space limitations if given
- Do go the extra mile and write any “optional” essay (as long as you have something meaningful to say)
- Tailor your responses to each school—do whatever research may be necessary

Don'ts

- Do not cut and paste the same essay that you used in your AADSAS application
- Do not submit information that is inconsistent with was provided in your AADSAS application
- Don't quote directly from a school catalog in an effort to “tailor” your answers
- Don't write, “see attached resume” instead of answering questions fully

RESOURCES

- The Career Center Library has a number of books on personal statement, including a compilation of essays written by former UM applicants. Come by to check our non-circulating resources at 3200 SAB, 515 E. Jefferson.
- Get Some Feedback. Strive to have more than one person review your personal statement such as your academic advisor, faculty, friends, family, etc. Schedule a personal statement review at The Career Center by calling 734/764-7460.