

Theresa M. Duello, PhD

Med School essay –

Many students are advised to ‘tell a story’, but this essay is much more than a story. In middle school, you were taught there were three parts to an essay –the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. You were probably also taught it had a single theme. [But this is a different type of writing](#). The introduction may have story elements, but the essay is more [like a report](#) responding to questions in the minds of the admissions committee.

Students think in terms of ‘What do I want to say? What do I want the admissions committee to know about me?’ And the admissions committee is asking ‘Is this someone who knows both the breadth and depth of what it means to be a physician?’ If you do not convince them by providing a great deal of [specific](#) information, the committee may conclude that – not having the breadth and depth of understanding – you might start medical school, decide you do not like it, and quit. And it is their job to choose well, because it costs a great deal of taxpayer money to train a physician.

Draft an outline **BEFORE** you write the first draft.

Outline -

I. First paragraph > Great introduction

Make the reader want to keep reading. Possibly about how you first became interested in science and medicine.

II. Second paragraph

Your interest in science/medicine led you to the University of _____ where you majored in _____. You were fortunate to have the opportunity to conduct research with Dr. _____ in the Department of _____ at the University of _____.

What you did

What you found

Why it is important

Note: Research teaches analytical thinking. Analytical thinking is the basis of diagnosis, so if you write about your research experience(s), you need to demonstrate that you learned to think analytically.

Admissions committee members may look at your math scores and whether you write richly about your research to determine if you are an analytical thinker.

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III. Third and possibly fourth paragraph - Your experience in medical/health/
community settings

What medical/health/community experiences have you? What did you **LEARN**?
What did you take to the situation? Naiveté? What did you take away?

How the physician delivered bad news?

The patient's reaction?

The need to pitch the message at the patient's education level?

The need for a translator?

The need to have awareness of cultural differences?

What did you learn about the healthcare team?

Not general information about the physician being nice. Or only that you are
really excited. (Everyone is excited.)

Note: This section is critically important. No one is going to admit you because
you already know how to draw blood or take a blood pressure.

IV. Great concluding paragraph

What do you want to do with your degree? Clinical practice in an academic
setting? Conduct research as a physician-scientist? Interest in any particular
specialty? Family medicine, pediatrics, OB? What do you see yourself doing
five years out? Will you donate time to a free clinic? Role model for other
youth? Lead medical missions? Head the Center for Disease Control?

Note: It is important to think beyond admission.

The goal is to answer the questions in the minds of the admissions committee members.
Not 'How badly does this person want to be a physician?', but 'Convince me you know
what a career in medicine entails.' Commitment, dedication, long hours, joys, and
sorrows. And the healthcare team. It takes an entire village to make someone well!

Great exercise - Go through the draft of your essay and underline each reason you
believe you gave the admissions committee to admit. You only get to use a reason once.
Then go through it again and highlight those that are reasons to admit you over someone
else. You want to be 'unique', not one of the pack.

Regards,

Dr. Duello