

The Three-Paragraph Format

Medical School Personal Statement Example

Illustrative example — tight three-paragraph structure: one scene, one turn, one claim.

*Liberal arts college · Philosophy and Biology (double major) · GPA 3.79 · MCAT 515 · Accepted:
Georgetown University School of Medicine*

Personal statement — full essay with paragraph-level annotations.

Essay

The chart said seventy-two-year-old, hypertensive, history of falls. The man in the bed was telling me about the night he played piano at Carnegie Hall in 1987. I had three minutes before the attending returned. I listened for all of them.

That afternoon became the clearest version of a question I had been asking in different forms across four years of studying philosophy and biology: what does it mean to know a person? In the laboratory I had learned to know organisms as systems, to describe their behavior in terms of mechanism and function. In the philosophy seminar I had learned to know persons as subjects, to ask what their experience is like from the inside. Neither framework was sufficient for the man in Room 11. He needed someone who could hold both at once, and the only discipline I had found that requires that is medicine.

I want to practice geriatric medicine because it is the field where the question I am asking is most urgent and most unresolved. Elderly patients arrive in clinical settings carrying decades of experience and a body that is changing in ways that complicate everything they

know about themselves. The physician who can hear both the chart and the story is the physician I am training to become.

Annotation

Three-paragraph discipline

Each paragraph carries one complete idea without overlap. Paragraph one is the scene. Paragraph two is the turn. Paragraph three is the claim. Nothing is wasted.

Opening compression

The four opening sentences accomplish what most applicants spend three paragraphs building: setting, patient as full person, time constraint, writer's response.

The double-major bridge

The essay earns the combination by showing what the writer found in each discipline and what was missing from both.

Why geriatrics

Specificity of specialty turns a general claim into a particular argument about fit.

AAMC competencies demonstrated

Critical thinking, service orientation, commitment to learning, understanding others, written communication.

