

# WRITING ESSAYS IN APPLICATION TO DENTAL SCHOOL

## AADSAS ESSAY

**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? Provide new information
- 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?
- 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?
- Think of your proudest moment. Why was that accomplishment particularly meaningful to you?
- 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
- Show you are realistic, not naive
- Maintain a positive approach
- Stress "how" more than "what": have a reflective vs. a descriptive tone
- Concentrate on your most recent experience
- Support information with relevant examples
- 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
- Use a nice size font, not smaller than 10 pt

- Proofread your essay carefully
- Have at least two people read your essay and provide feedback
- Request assistance from The Writing Center (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing>)

#### **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., that particular patient in the ER)
- Don't focus the entire essay on others (i.e., role model)-the focus should be on you
- Don't sacrifice content for creativity-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