

FREE RESOURCE

How to Write Your Dental School Personal Statement

What to include, what to avoid, and how to make yours unforgettable.

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

08

01



What It IS

- A narrative — your story, told in your voice
- An explanation of why YOU specifically belong in dentistry
- Evidence that you understand what dentistry involves (clinical exposure)
- A chance to address weaknesses, gaps, or unconventional paths
- A preview of who you will be as a clinician and colleague

What It IS NOT

- A list of your accomplishments (your activities section handles that)
- A biography from childhood to present
- A place to tell the committee what they already know about dentistry
- Generic — "I have always wanted to help people" is not a statement
- A re-statement of your GPA or DAT scores

Word Limit

ADEA AADSAS limits your personal statement to 4,500 characters (roughly 650–700 words). Every sentence needs to earn its spot.

02



A Framework Used by Successful Applicants

Opening Hook	1 paragraph	Grab attention immediately	A specific scene, moment, or patient interaction — not a generic statement about dentistry.
Your Why	2–3 paragraphs	Build your case	The experiences that confirmed your path. Be specific. Use what you observed while shadowing.
Your Fit	1 paragraph	Show self-awareness	Skills, traits, and experiences that make you suited to be a dentist — not just a good student.
The Close	1 paragraph	Forward-looking	Where you see yourself going. Connect your goals to your training. End with conviction.

03



MISTAKE 01

Starting with "I have always wanted to be a dentist"

This is the single most common opening line in dental school personal statements. It tells the reader nothing and signals a lack of creativity. Start with a moment, not a declaration.

MISTAKE 02

Writing about a personal dental experience as a child

Unless it directly led to a formative shadowing or clinical experience, your childhood cavity is not relevant. Committees have read this story thousands of times.

MISTAKE 03

Listing experiences instead of reflecting on them

"I shadowed for 200 hours at XYZ Dental" is not a personal statement — it is a bullet point. What did you observe? What changed in how you understood the profession?

MISTAKE 04

Being vague about what you want to do with your degree

You do not need a 20-year plan. But "I want to help underserved communities" with no specifics is not compelling. Name a population, a geography, a setting.

MISTAKE 05

Writing for a generic reader instead of a dental school

Every program is reading your statement. Do not write something so broad that it could be submitted to medical school too. Dentistry is distinct — show that you know why.

MISTAKE 06

Not having anyone read it

You will not catch your own errors after the tenth read. Have a dentist, a writing-strong peer, and ideally a mentor review it before submission.

04



The Editing Process

Round 1 — Content

Does every paragraph serve a purpose? Are you telling a story or listing accomplishments? Cut anything that does not build your case.

Round 2 — Voice

Read it out loud. Does it sound like you? If you would never say something in conversation, rewrite it. Formal does not mean robotic.

Round 3 — Mechanics

Grammar, spelling, punctuation. Run it through spell-check, then read it backward sentence by sentence to catch errors your brain autocorrects.

Round 4 — Fresh Eyes

Give it to someone who has never read a draft. Their confusion points to your blind spots.

Final Checklist

- Under 4,500 characters in AADSAS
- Does not start with "I have always wanted..."
- Includes at least one specific clinical observation
- Explains why dentistry specifically — not medicine, not another health profession
- Has a clear, confident closing paragraph
- Free of spelling and grammar errors
- Read by at least two outside reviewers
- Addresses any significant GPA dip or gap year (if applicable)
- Does not repeat your activities list — adds new information
- Your name is NOT in the statement (some schools blind-review)

PDI's Document Deep Dive mentorship tier is built specifically for applicants who want expert, line-by-line feedback on their personal statement before submission. Apply at:

predentalinstituteofchicago.com

Pre-Dental Institute of Chicago