



## TIPS FOR WRITING APPLICATION EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTIONS

### WHICH EXPERIENCES TO INCLUDE ON YOUR APPLICATION?

You are given a limited number of entries. As you think about your past experiences, think broadly about their relevance to your personal development. Select an assortment of meaningful experiences that particularly informed/fostered your:

- Understanding of the career you seek to enter:
  - Particularly important: Focus on the *patients*. You may want to mention insights you have gained into the work of clinicians, but only in a manner that is secondary to the insights you have gained about the experiences of patients.
  - Convey awareness of the social factors influencing your intended profession
- Passion for direct service to others
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Understanding of people of different cultural and/or socioeconomic backgrounds
- Understanding of human behavior
- Approach to structured intellectual inquiry (i.e. research experience in any field)
- Capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving where the answer is not clear
- Resilience in the face of challenges, ability to learn from experience, capacity for self-reflection

### HOW TO CREATE COMPELLING EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTIONS

#### LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Each experience description should be written as a narrative summary, using complete sentences.
- Possible exception (mainly for AMCAS): For Shadowing, Honors and Awards, or Publications, you may use a bulleted list.
- Maximum length (varies by application service): typically 600-700 characters, including spaces.

#### TOPICS TO ADDRESS IN EACH EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

- Convey your level of involvement in the activity
- Provide a thoughtful, heartfelt description of the way in which the experience impacted you:
  - The insights you gained from the experience
  - How the experience shaped your motivations
  - How the experience shaped your personal development
- ... Do NOT provide a list of technical skills that you have mastered

### **Shadowing**

Shadowing is the observation of a health care provider while that individual cares for and treats patients.

- Reflect upon the insights you gained from observing others:
  - What you have learned about the needs of patients and effective, compassionate approaches to patient care?
  - What you have learned about the nature of the work itself?
- Logistical considerations:
  - In AMCAS: Group all short-term shadowing experiences into a single Experiences entry. You can provide bulleted list of the names and specialties of the people you shadowed at the beginning of your Experience Description.
  - In all other applications: Enter each shadowing experience as a separate entry

### **Direct Patient Interaction**

Direct patient interaction is defined as being in a position to offer comfort and moral support to conscious patients (and, for pre-vet students, human clients) in a health care environment. It may include attending to patients' health maintenance, progression, or end of life needs. It is important that you convey your comfort level with patients who are sick or injured.

- Describe your level of involvement in direct patient interaction
- Where possible, include anecdotes of meaningful interactions you have had with patients in clinical settings
- Convey how your patient interaction experiences have:
  - Reinforced your interest in entering a career that focuses on patient care
  - Given you first-hand insight into effective approaches to caring for patients and their loved ones

### **Research**

Research is defined as involvement in a scholarly or scientific hypothesis investigation that is supervised by an individual with verifiable research credentials. Research may be in any discipline and performed at any site, but it must involve the testing of a hypothesis.

- State your research topic or specific question
- Convey your level of intellectual involvement. Note if you have:
  - Been engaged in reading and discussing relevant primary literature
  - Participated in laboratory meetings on a regular basis
  - Contributed to experimental design
  - Engaged in troubleshooting when the unexpected occurs
  - Written a successful grant proposal
  - Written a research thesis and/or manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
  - Presented at a conference
- Provide a reflection statement: Why have you have found it intellectually rewarding to engage in this work?
- If results are available, summarize them and briefly indicate why they are interesting/meaningful

### **Non-clinical employment and volunteer work**

- Convey your level of involvement/responsibility
- Where applicable, share how this experience reinforced your interest in a career focused on service to others and/or intellectual problem-solving
- Reflect upon the personal skills fostered by the experience
- Where applicable, explain how certain experiences have given you insight into effective approaches to:
  - Being of service to people in marginalized populations
  - Effective approaches to collaboration
  - Effective approaches to leadership

### **Honors, Awards, Scholarships, Academic Enrichment Programs**

- Only include examples that are a really big deal
- In your description, identify the selection criteria

### **Hobbies**

- Create a single "Hobbies" entry, identifying your favorite hobbies. This entry shows that you have other passions, conveys how you relieve stress, and (potentially) allows you to connect with interviewers due to a shared hobby.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE EXPERIENCES SECTION

### 1. What if I'm not sure which category is most appropriate for a given activity?

Choose the one that you feel fits best. For example, if you worked in a research lab, but it was purely a dishwashing job (with no involvement in the research itself), then list this position as "Other Paid Employment," not "Research." Likewise, if you completed a summer engineering internship in a Research and Development group, but were not conducting hypothesis-driven research, then this would also fall under the "Other Paid Employment" category.

### 2. What if different aspects of the same experience fit in different categories?

- Option 1: Give each aspect of the activity its own entry (with inclusive dates and hours per week for just that aspect of your involvement) under the appropriate category.
  - This approach highlights each aspect of the experience, but uses up two of your limited allotment of entries.
- Option 2: List it just once, under the category that represents the activity that was most dominant. Use the Experience Description to explain the two aspects of the experience.
  - Example: If you worked full-time in a medical clinic where roughly 60% of your time was spent as a medical assistant and 40% of your time was spent as a receptionist at the front desk, you could list the experience as "Medical Assistant and Receptionist" and use the Experience Description to describe each set of duties.

### 3. How should I enter the contact information for the supervisors of my activities?

Indicate a person who can be contacted by the professional schools and would be able to verify that the experience occurred. For example, you may enter your supervisor or the individual in charge of a particular program. If the experience was a student-organized group and there is no official supervisor, you may list a staff member in the Student Affairs Office who can verify your experience.

### 4. Why am I asked to provide inclusive dates, hours per week, and total hours?

These entries give application reviewers a sense of how much time you spent on each activity. If you spent a lot of time, your interviewers will expect you to have more in-depth knowledge of the activity than if you spent just a little time on it.