

DARTMOUTH

Health Professions Program

Geisel Early Assurance Program (EAP) Writing Tips & Advice, Choosing Writers, & The Autobiographical Sketch 2024-2025 Application July 2024

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Writing for the Geisel EAP Application

It's important to start preparing for and starting your writing for Geisel EAP early. A well-written application is an essential component of a strong application. The application itself contains a work and activities section, plus three essay prompts. It takes more time than you might think to gather and reflect on your experiences and write an effective narrative.

The Work & Activities Section

This section contains 10 entries, all of which have a 700-character limit to write about each of your experiences. You will also select three of your experiences as your “most meaningful” and expand on those with a 1,325-character limit. This allows you to provide more detailed information and examples about these experiences and their impact on you. We recommend doing the following to prepare:

- **Create a spreadsheet or document** that lists all of your experiences (ex. jobs, internships, research, extracurriculars, volunteer work, sports, etc.), even the ones you think might not be relevant. Include start and end dates, as well as the number of hours you were involved in each experience. Make sure to gather the contact

information of your supervisors.

- **What did you learn?** Consider this question for each experience. You may also want to consider how you grew during this experience. What skills, abilities, competencies, or personal qualities did you develop? What were your specific tasks and responsibilities?
- **How was it meaningful?** Consider this question for each experience. How was each experience meaningful to you? How did it influence or impact you personally, intellectually, or in some other way? Brainstorm specific moments or details to use as examples.

The Personal Statement

The process of gathering and reflecting on your experiences for the work and activities section will also help you to prepare your personal statement. Your personal statement should address your motivations for pursuing medicine, and the ways you've explored, prepared, and developed these motivations. You'll have a 5,300-character limit to describe your motivations. To gather your thoughts and ideas, consider the following questions:

- Is there a connection between an experience and the growth or affirmation of your motivations?
- Are there any passions or inspirations you want to highlight?
- Did you navigate any challenges that impacted or influenced your pursuit of medicine?

Tips for Writing Your Personal Statement

- **Write narratively and use an active voice as much as possible.** You want to write a personal statement that others will want to read! Keep it authentic and use specific examples and anecdotes.
- **Emphasize what you learned and the impact on you.** Do not just write about what happened, include why it was important to you and your journey. The goal is to help readers learn about YOU and not just what you did.
- **Do not just list or summarize your experiences.** Remember that this is what the work and activities section is for!
- **Do not focus too much on childhood experiences.** You may have had an early catalyst for pursuing medicine, but medical schools want to know that you have given your motivations significant thought and reflection, as well as demonstrated experiences into adulthood.
- **If you write about a challenging experience, be positive and don't focus on resentment or anger.** Focus on your strengths, growth, and resilience.
- **Be confident when writing about your feelings.** Don't be afraid to talk about your experiences, how you felt, and why you did what you did.
- **Format.** While there isn't a specific "template," your personal statement should include a distinct introduction, body, and conclusion.

General Writing Tips & Advice

- **Do not focus on character count at the beginning.** Focus on content. What do you want to convey? Once you figure that out, then work on editing your writing to fit the character limit.

- **Do not rush your writing.** While there is a timeline to consider, give yourself enough time to reflect on what you want to convey, and then write using compelling prose.
- **Be sincere.**

Tips for Choosing Your Writers

- You can ask for 2 – 5 letters.
 - Geisel strongly prefers **two of your letters** be from faculty who have taught you in a science course. However, if you do not have two science faculty, Geisel will accept a letter from a PI you've done science research with.
- Consider asking for at least one letter from a faculty member in your major (if you're not a science major). If you don't have a major faculty member, consider asking for a letter from a faculty member who taught a course that was meaningful to you.
- Consider asking for a letter from someone outside of the classroom. This can be a research supervisor (PI); job, internship, or volunteer supervisor, advisor (academic, professional, or extracurricular), Foreign Study faculty, etc. These letters can be from people outside of the Dartmouth community.

The best combination of letters will demonstrate different facets of you and your experiences, both in and out of the classroom, and will provide insight into your academic/intellectual, professional, and personal qualities.

Most writers will address what they have personally observed about or experienced with you. That said, we recommend providing them with an “autobiographical sketch.” This is an informal way of providing them with greater context about your background, experiences, and motivations or goals. We'll provide more information about how to write an autobiographical sketch later in this document.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is it really okay to ask? **YES!**
 - Part of working in education is the value system of supporting student growth and writing letters is an element of this. Writing letters is a part of faculty and staff roles.
2. How do I ask? **Either in person (if you see them regularly) or by email.**
 - Inform them of your goal to pursue medicine, and plan to apply to Geisel Early Assurance. Ask if they would consider writing you a letter of recommendation. Tell them specifically about why you'd like them to write a letter for you. Invite them to meet with you in person or over Zoom to discuss more if they'd like to.
3. What if I'm not “friends” with my writer(s)? **This is OKAY!**
 - There are many ways a writer can know you. The best choice of writers are those who have had the chance to observe your relevant abilities, skills, and qualities – you don't need to have been “friends” with them. For instance, did a writer observe that you were an active and engaged participant in class? Did they observe that you attended office hours frequently or spoke after class? Did they observe that you made insightful contributions to class discussions? That you were a leader? That you were collaborative? That you were inclusive? Demonstrative growth? Persistence? Resilience? Compassion or empathy?
4. If I work in a lab, what do I do if I mostly interact with a graduate student instead of my

PI? **This is very common!**

- PIs and graduate students are usually willing to work on letters together. Typically, the graduate student will draft the letter, or provide a summary, that the PI will use to formalize the letter into a final draft and sign. It's okay to directly ask them about this.
5. One of my writers is worried that they don't have a formal writing background, can they still write? **Yes!**
- Medical schools want to learn about their applicants and appreciate that writers of any background can write sincere, thoughtful letters. If any of your writers are unsure how to approach writing a medical school letter, you can share with them the [AAMC's Letter Guidelines](#).

What Should I Do After My Letter Writers Say Yes?

1. Agree on a due date. **We recommend at least two weeks before the official deadline**, so writers have some wiggle room if need be.
2. Open a PrivateFolio account (our letter dossier service). See our [Geisel EAP Letter Packet Instructions](#) for more information.
3. Create a PrivateFolio Letter of Recommendation Request for each of your writers (again, see our Geisel EAP Letter Packet Instructions for more information). This will prompt PrivateFolio to send your writers and upload link.
4. Send your writers your resume and we strongly recommend an autobiographical sketch.

The Autobiographical Sketch

While writing an autobiographical sketch isn't required, we do strongly recommend it. An autobiographical sketch can provide helpful context about yourself, your abilities, experiences, motivations, and goals that can aid them with the writing process. Additionally, it may be helpful to meet with your writers to discuss your application – if they are willing.

The self-reflection involved in writing an autobiographical sketch is a great way to begin the reflection that is essential for the application itself. The format is flexible. You can write your sketch as an essay or in sections. You can choose the topics you wish to write about based on what you think is most relevant or important (ex. family or childhood background, before college, academics, professional, extracurricular, or volunteer experiences, sports, music/arts, research, meaningful influences or experiences, motivations for pursuing medicine, etc.).

The autobiographical sketch is also a place to share any unique challenges you have faced with your writers – if you want to. Feel free to discuss this with an advisor if you're unsure!

Self-Reflection & Questions to Consider

1. What were your formative experiences with your family, education, or community before college?
2. What experiences have you had over the years that have been meaningful to you?
3. How have you grown academically and personally? Do you have any academic challenges to discuss?
4. What classes have meant the most to you?
5. Have you conducted research? How has it been meaningful to you?
6. What extracurriculars or passions (music, athletics, etc.) are you involved in? How have they inspired or surprised you? What do you find meaningful about them?
7. Have you engaged in certain themes in your studies or experiences (ex. working with

children, elderly, disadvantaged communities, etc.; research into autism, dementia, oncology, etc.)?

8. Why do you want to study medicine/dentistry? What has influenced and affirmed this choice? Who has influenced or inspired you?

Assessing Your Application

It's important to apply with a strong, competitive application. We are committed to helping you be well-positioned for success with personalized feedback based on our years of experience and assessment. We can review your academic and extracurricular portfolio to help you assess if any aspects of your application need strengthening. We can also help assess if it is in your best interest to apply to Geisel EAP whether for personal, academic, or other reasons.

You can schedule an appointment via Calendly with [Sarah Berger](#) or [Nicole Roeper](#). If you are unable to find a time that works for you, please contact Rae Stokes at Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu or 603-646-3377.

