

UPR
IPeRT

WRITING APPLICATION ESSAYS FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS AND INTERNSHIPS

October 15, 2019



SALLY J. DELGADO, PH.D.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, UPR-CAYEY



wikiHow to Bowl



READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

- What do they want?
... No really, what do they want?
- What do they have already?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the purpose?

...Answer the Prompt

Personal Statement
Statement of Intent
Application Essay

- “Use the space provided to explain why you want to go to medical school.” (5300 characters, or approx. 1 page) **Generic prompt UPR-RCM**
- “Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.” **Most common application prompt 2018-19**
- “Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.” **Second most common application prompt 2018-19**
- “The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?” **Third most common application prompt 2018-19**
- “Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story”. **Most common application prompt 2017-18**

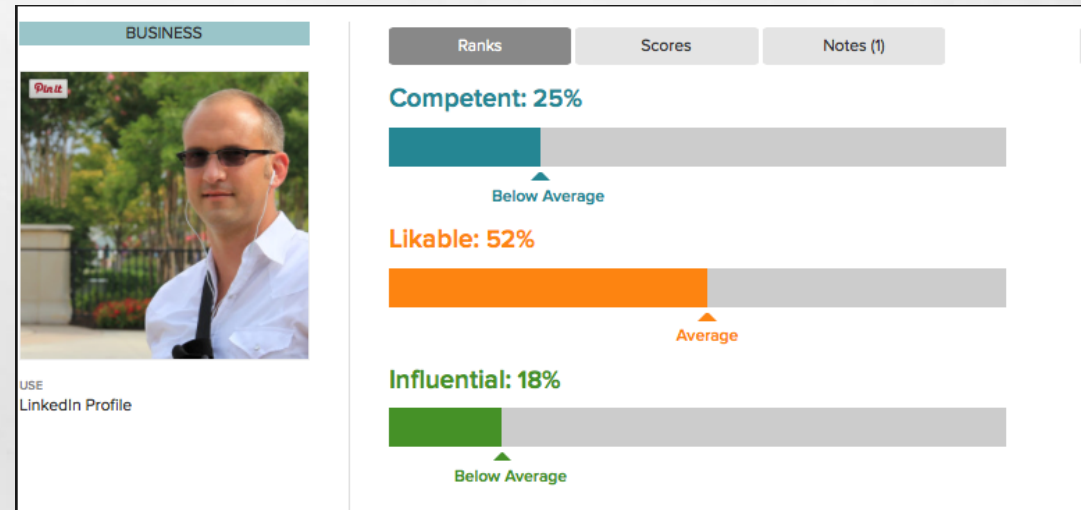
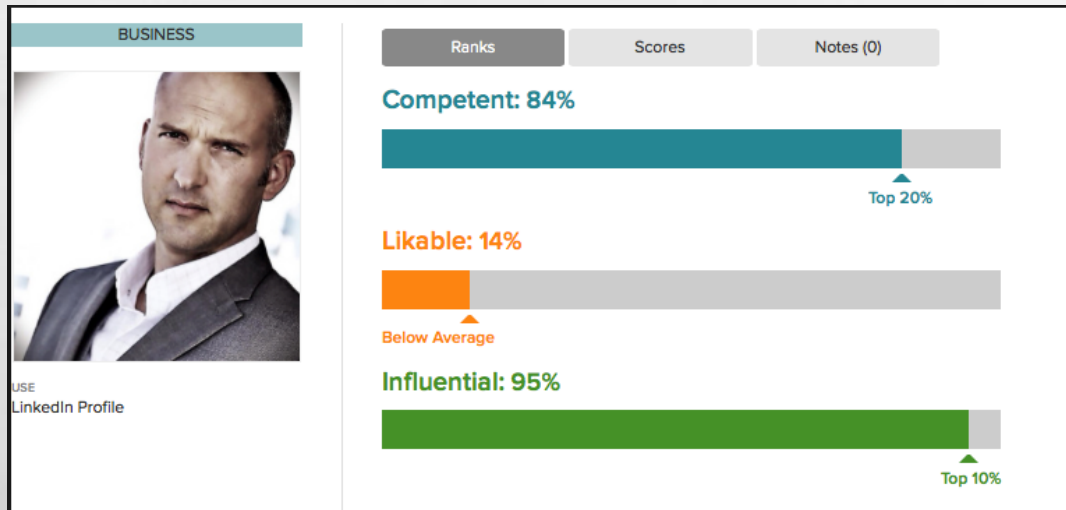
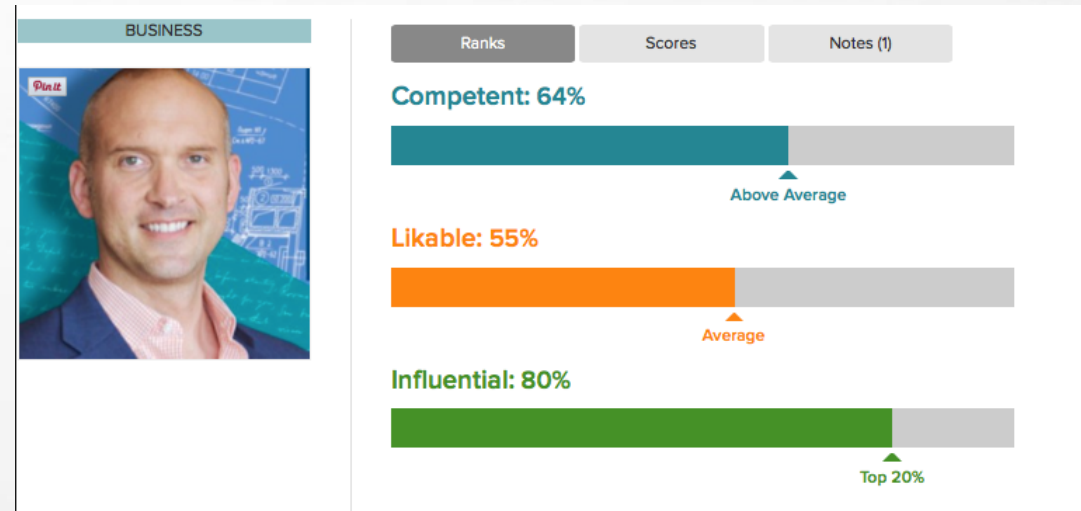
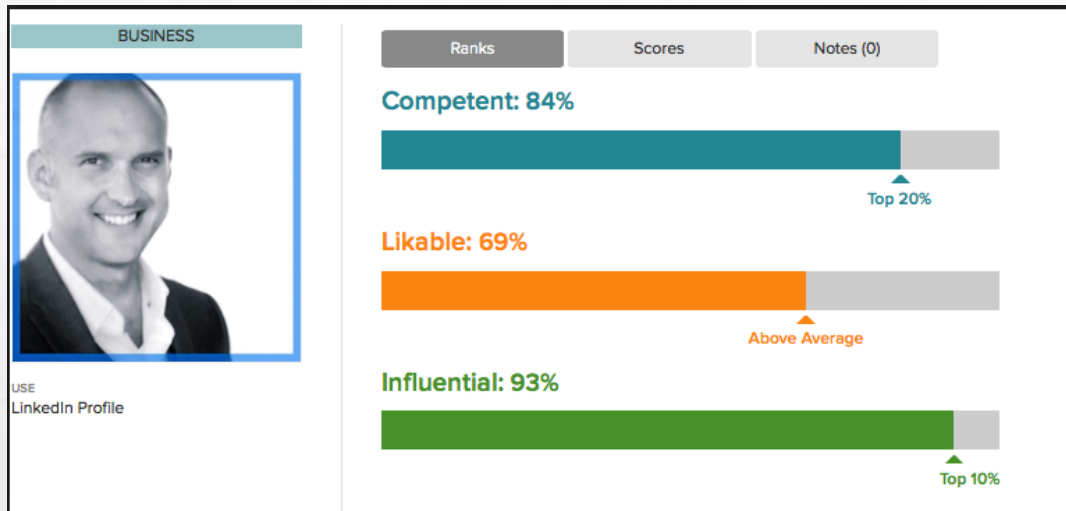
They want to know you can write... they want something interesting



CHOOSE YOUR FOCUS

<p>New Test +</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>1</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>2</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>3</p>
 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>4</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>5</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>6</p>	 <p>BUSINESS</p> <p>7</p>

Best LinkedIn Profiles: Pictures Tips by Jerome Knyszewski
Published on August 20, 2015Featured in: *LinkedIn Tips*⁴



“That first impression is priceless” Jerom

...Make a first impression

- Choose an angle and a background context
- Don't try to cover too much – it's a snapshot
- Brainstorm some ideas to find the right angle
- Choose and have confidence in your decision
- Reflect on the relevance, but don't tell a reader what to think



CREATE A NARRATIVE

- Develop a strong narrative by using a strong opening line and a closing line that give a sense of completion to the essay
- DO NOT write a chronological story of your life
- Choose to talk about one or two related experiences that have a logical connection or can be reflected upon in a similar way
- Be original, avoid quotations – they want to hear your voice
- Write in fully developed paragraphs, not fragments.

EXERCISE:

Read the two samples.

Which one will you remember?

Who sounds more interesting?

Who you are going to interview?

Grad application committees have hundreds of essays to read and need to make a shortlist

Sample A

Dr. Peter Safar, the Australian physician that pioneered cardiopulmonary resuscitation, once said: “The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself!” Yes, the future is uncertain but we can prepare ourselves with the necessary skills to face it

This program would give me the scientific, cultural and professional experience to network with people that have different interests and points of view. This opportunity would be of great personal and professional growth for my future because I will be able to learn new procedures, and research techniques; at the same time, improve leadership and teamwork skills.

Sample B

Being born is an act of defiance. No matter the circumstances, time or place, birth is inevitable. Against all the imaginable and unimaginable odds the human body manages to reproduce itself in the most orchestral way.

...

As they maneuvered through complicated surgeries or biopsies they patiently answered any question that I nervously blurt out. I began ingesting and absorbing the right nutrition, research and clinical information, that have sustained me to this day. Now that I have travelled and ingested the right nutrients from my surroundings I am prepared to embark on a new journey, implantation and development inside the School of Medicine. This journey will culminate with the birth of a physician

A white bowling pin with the number 4 on it, positioned vertically on the left side of the slide. The pin has two red rings near the top.

4

SHOW, DON'T TELL

- Avoid listing your skills and personal qualities
e.g., “I am hardworking. I am reliable and have a lot of experience working with people”
- Instead, choose a focus and describe an experience that **SHOWS** the particular skill you want to communicate

Sample C: Show don't tell

The humid, thick air hits my burning forehead. Adrenaline is flowing through my veins, I can feel it in the tip of my fingers. Breathe in, breathe out. I feel my heart pumping in my throat, I hardly breathe. Drops of sweat are running wildly in my back. Breathe in, breathe out. "I'm not tired" I say to myself, but my legs are aching and blood is running down my knee, but i don't feel pain. Breath in, breath out. The referee blows the whistle and suddenly I find myself sprinting towards the ball.

...

As I push through the pain in my soccer games, I push through what I want for my career. I may fall and lose at times but it doesn't stop me if I want something. It's the process of what makes a professional.

This essay got a high-school senior into 5 Ivy League schools and Stanford:

Managing to break free from my mother's grasp, I charged. With arms flailing and chubby legs fluttering beneath me, I was the ferocious two year old rampaging through Costco on a Saturday morning. My mother's eyes widened in horror as I jettisoned my churro; the cinnamon sugar rocket gracefully sliced its way through the air while I continued my spree. I sprinted through the aisles, looking up in awe at the massive bulk products that towered over me. Overcome with wonder, I wanted to touch and taste, to stick my head into industrialized freezers, to explore every crevice. I was a conquistador, but rather than searching the land for El Dorado, I scoured aisles for free samples. Before inevitably being whisked away into a shopping cart, I scaled a mountain of plush toys and surveyed the expanse that lay before me: the kingdom of Costco.

...

My intense desire to know, to explore beyond the bounds of rational thought; this is what defines me. Costco fuels my insatiability and cultivates curiosity within me at a cellular level. Encoded to immerse myself in the unknown, I find it difficult to complacently accept the "what"; I want to hunt for the "whys" and dissect the "hows". In essence, I subsist on discovery.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/high-school-senior-who-got-into-5-ivy-league-schools-shares-her-admissions-essay-2016-4>

A white bowling pin with the number 5 on it, positioned vertically on the left side of the slide. The pin has two red rings near the top.

5

SHARE AND ACCEPT FEEDBACK

- Share your draft with at least two people who will give you honest, critical feedback
- Respect their time (don't pressure them for a reply, leave the draft with them and get the feedback later, thank them)
- Listen to their feedback carefully and try not to be defensive. Let them help you make improvements.
- Use their critical feedback to make improvements to the draft



6

EDIT: AVOID CLICHÉ

Editing is about making sure the content is relevant, well structured and expressed effectively for the intended audience and purpose.

- Ever since I was _____ I have always wanted to be a _____
- I suddenly realized that I wanted to be a _____
- My _____ is a _____
- My _____ got sick/died and so I want to be a doctor
- I want to open my own clinic / school / office
- I want to be a doctor because I want to save lives / cure cancer
- I want to be a teacher because the current system is failing
- I am really passionate about _____

Clear the Clutter - Write sentences that are direct, relevant, and brief.



EDIT: CONTROL TONE

Most common problems that create **arrogant tone**:

- Describing yourself as if you are already in the profession
- Describing what that job involves
- Using phrases like “obviously,” “of course” and “clearly”
- Talking only about yourself your achievements, and your milestones

Most common problems that create **simplistic tone**:

- Thinking that one work shadowing experience or a family history in this profession prepares you for your future career
- Describing a single career path with an endpoint that makes you the boss
- Explaining how you intend to solve massive and complex problems

Be confident but collaborative.

Be ambitious but realistic.

Be ambitious but humble.

Sample D: Superior tone

Why do people choose desire over necessity?

....

A scientist myself, I felt trivialized. However, deep reflection brought me to an understanding, they don't know science. How many people don't know science? Most people in America don't even know that evolution is not just a theory but an observable fact. Some people are even unaware of the most basic rules of Physics or how Entropy works. The world is not so simple tho,



PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD

Proofreading is about making sure the content has 100% accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

- Although this stage means you are nearly finished, don't RUSH as mistakes show a lack of care and attention to details
- Check you own work with attention to your own most common mistakes
- Run the work through software programs (e.g., Word, grammarcheck.net)
- Double-check with a professional who writes in English, the English tutors at CAETV, or your English professor

...some of the most common errors

- **Run-on Sentence (aka Comma Splice)** e.g., I am really excited about this opportunity, I know it will help me achieve my short term goals.
- **Pronoun Problems**, e.g., Everybody have to visit the dentist.
- **Apostrophe Mistakes**, e.g., Its always been my dream to help children's learn.
- **Lack of Noun/Verb Agreement**, e.g., These opportunity are good for students.
- **Misplaced Modifiers**, e.g., At eight years old, my father showed me his clinic.
- **Translation errors**, e.g., Was the biggest dream of my childhood.
- **Shifting verb tense**, e.g., When I was in school, I have a great teacher who help me.



PLAN FOR SUCCESS

- Think about all of the stages your essay needs to pass through and make a plan to dedicate time to each one before the due date

STAGES:

- ✓ Read instructions and generate ideas that respond to the prompt
- ✓ Choose your focus to make a first impression
- ✓ Write a first draft with a narrative making sure your show, don't tell
- ✓ Share your draft and accept feedback
- ✓ Edit based on feedback, avoid cliché, control tone
- ✓ Proofread, Proofread, Proofread

Ideal timespan to plan for success: 2-3 months



READ THE INSTRUCTIONS AGAIN

Before you submit anything, go back to the instructions and read them again. Pay attention to:

- Wordcount, length, font size restrictions and/or instructions
- How you should save and send the file
- The specific wording of the prompt
- At this stage... if you need to go back and make corrections or changes DO IT!



**THANKS FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

REFERENCES

1. Personal statement for UPR-RCM (Slide 4) via AMCAS online application can be accessed at <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/applying-medical-school-amcas/>
2. Most common application prompts (Slide 4) <https://www.commonapp.org/blog/2019-2020-common-app-essay-prompts>
3. Prompt #1, 2017-2018 Common Application Essay Prompts, (Slide 4) can be accessed at <http://www.commonapp.org/whats-appening/application-updates/common-application-announces-2017-2018-essay-prompts>
4. Best LinkedIn Profiles: Pictures Tips by Jerome Knyszewski (Slides 5-7) Published on August 20, 2015 Featured in: LinkedIn Tips can be accessed at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/best-linkedin-profile-pictures-tips-jerome-knyszewski>
5. “A good paragraph is structured like a miniature essay” (Slide 8) <http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf>
6. Student writing samples A, B, C, D and E (Slides 10-12, 14 & 18) courtesy of students in INGL 3236 “Scientific Writing” at Rio Piedras, academic year 2016-2017.
7. [grammarcheck.net](http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf) (Slide 19) can be accessed at <http://www.trinitydc.edu/writing/files/2010/09/Elements-of-a-Strong-Paragraph.pdf>