

Crafting CVs & Personal Statements



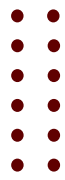
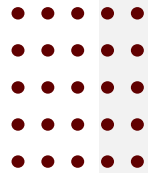
Amal Abu Libdeh, MD

Associate Professor-Pediatric Neurology- SOM-UJ

Pediatric Residency Program Director- JUH

Executive Board Member- JAPA

Co – Chair of JAPA’s Resident Committee



Why should you listen to me ?





Crafting CVs

Writing Personal Statements

CV components:

- Short bio
- Demographic information
- Education
- Work experience
- Exam scores
- Electives/ clinical attachments
- Research experience
- Volunteer experience
- Hobbies, interests, etc.



General tips



- Most CVs look similar academically: GPAs, exam scores, similar rotations, electives.
- **Selection decisions are often made on NON-clinical differentiators.**
- As a program director/recruiter:
 - You are not asking “who is the smartest.”
 - You are asking:
 - Who is reliable?
 - Who is trustworthy
 - Who is safe?
 - Who is easy to work with?

General tips



- Know what you include depending on what you're applying for
- Don't add unnecessary details
- Don't add incorrect information
- You may be asked about anything in the CV (courses you took, conferences you attended, research you worked on, skills you mentioned, even hobbies)
- Be prepared to explain gaps in your CV (missed years during education, periods of no employment, etc.)

Red flags:

- Poorly written, disorganized CVs
- Unimportant details or activities.
- Vague description of activities.
- Passive CV (“attended”, “observed”, “participated”) vs (“led”, “organized”, “created”, “established”, etc.



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Exam scores



- **GPA**, USMLE, PLAP, IELTS, TOEFL, I FOAM, etc.
- Clearly, the higher the better , and first attempt passing is best
- However, do NOT be discouraged if you get low scores or have to re take the test.

There are other aspects to present

- More importantly, do NOT be arrogant because of your scores → any recruiter will dismiss you if they sense that

Elective rotations, attachments, etc.



- Hands-on > Observership > Virtual Observership (almost gone?) > none
- Academic > non-academic hospital based > private clinic
- More is better; however, many have a cap after which the value drops

What to highlight:

- Highlight what you learned in a meaningful way
- If observership: focus on its strengths (what you learned, any contributions)
- If none, show evidence of interest and attempt.
- Get a LoR, form connections, and become familiar with the health system

Research experience



- Understanding methodology is more important than number of publications.
- One project where you **designed/ analyzed/ presented** is better than multiple projects with no understanding.
- **Practical tip:** Include **your actual role** (data collection, manuscript writing, etc.), and **your specific skills** (SPSS, systematic review, etc.)

Research experience



- Do NOT exaggerate
 - Conference abstract is not publishing – place it under abstracts
 - Ground rounds are not “oral presentations at a national conference”
- Publishing: reputable journal > predatory journals > not publishing
- If weaker journal or small role: focus on what processes you learned, show flexibility, and being teachable
- Consider a LoR from a research mentor – (two-edged sword)

Volunteer Experience



- Be **passionate** about your volunteer activities and hobbies
- ✓ Not just an opportunity, you wanted to make a difference
- ✓ How I would do something like this in my career, in your institute
- **Keep it simple:**
 - Highlights ***leadership*** and ***teamwork*** attributes
 - Emphasize “teachable moments” for you and colleagues

Hobbies, languages, etc.



- **Keep it real**
 - Don't make things up about books you read or languages you speak.
- If used right, it can be a **discussion point** and **build rapport** in the interview.

Overall tips



- Make your CV wholesome. Recruiters look at applicants holistically, so supplement weaker areas by strengthening others.
- Be real and passionate
- Focus on quality, not quantity
- Highlight the humane side of the experience, not just the experience



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Writing Personal Statements



Amal Abu Libdeh

September 22, 2014 · 🌐

Thanks for the add!

Amal Abu Libdeh, MBBS.
PGY-3 Pediatric Neurology.
University of Virginia
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Virginia



Comment as Amal





Amal Abu Libdeh

September 10, 2019 · 🌐

About Personal Statements: 😊

Salam everyone, I wanted to share some advice about personal statements, as time for applying approaches . I am a pediatric neurologist at a competitive university hospital, and have been on the committee that reviews residency applications for a while now. I've read so many LOR and PS! and managed to discuss many of these with my American colleagues. Many of you know me as I reviewed PS for some of the members of this group, and I wanted to share the points I feel like I tell everyone when I read their PS.

- the personal statement should be personal, and should not be a reiteration of your ERAS application because we already have that. People read it to get to know YOU, and find something to talk about during the interview. Try to make it interesting, mention something you want people to know about you, that makes your PS stand out.
- don't make it boring or sad, don't tell us that you spend your vacation reading medical stuff!
- stick to one page , don't make it too long and redundant.
- please don't tell us how well you did in Tawjihi, people here don't get it, and frankly don't care!
- when referring to years in medical school (e.g, during my 4th yr so and so happened), keep in mind that medical school is different in the US that it is in Jordan. So 4th yr in the US is the last year of medical school . You may wanna express that differently to get your point across .
- have many people read your PS. Try every effort to have a native American speaker read it, or at least someone who spent a long time in the US. Using websites is fine , just be careful as they may make it "too good" or too "cliche", and program directors can pick on that. It's bad if your PS has obvious grammatical mistakes , but it's worse if you copy and paste some sentences from a website just because they sound better than what you intended to say !

Few updates from the PS I read in 2020:

- try to stick to one page , otherwise it will be too long and people are less likely to read it.
- you don't need to explain "why you decided to come to the US " . I mean it's obvious , you are applying in the US , so this is redundant !
- Better not to use abbreviations!
- it rarely makes sense to mention the names of people you've worked with!
- avoid exaggeration. It's ok to use "glad" or "happy" instead of "thrilled". The word "extremely" generally shouldn't be used !

And I wish you all the best of luck ❤️.

Amal





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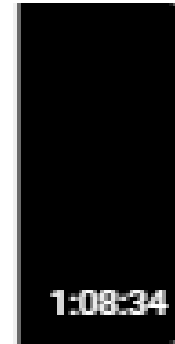
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Questions- comments

Thank You !

Amal Abu Libdeh, MD

