

Guide to Completing the Work & Activities Section of the Medical School Application

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The Basics:

- You should take as much care with this section as with the personal statement, not just copying and pasting from your resume. This section will be reviewed *before* the personal statement. It shows the admissions committee what you care about and how you spend your time outside the classroom.
- For each of your 15 experiences, you will incorporate:
 - Time spent
 - Responsibilities, accomplishments, and impact made
 - [AAMC Core Competencies](#) you demonstrated

AMCAS

- For AMCAS, you may list up to 15 experiences each with a 700 character limit. You will select among those 15 experiences three that are the most meaningful and have additional space (1,325 characters) to describe them.
- For your most meaningful activities, you'll highlight how an activity has helped you to grow, mature, develop new skills, and changed your perspective.
- You may include the hours you anticipate spending on an activity in the coming months.
- This section cannot be modified after submission.
- Example of how an experience will appear to admissions committees:

Experience Type:	Paid Employment - Not Medical/Clinical	Most Meaningful Experience:	No
Experience Name:	Paraprofessional for Children with Disabilities	Dates:	07/2017 - 08/2017 07/2018 - 08/2018
Contact Name & Title:	Kathleen Browning, Director	Total Hours:	120 120
Contact Email:	browningk@newton.k12.ma.us	Contact Phone:	6179471768
Organization Name:	Early Childhood Program for 3-5 Year-olds with Disabilities		
City / State / Country:	Newton / MA / United States of America (the)		
Experience Description:	At this program for children with medically complex physical and/or cognitive disabilities, I worked one-on-one with a child every day, becoming accountable and responsible for that child's safety, comfort, and social, physical, and academic learning. Every child had a different disability and cultural background. As such, there were times when language barriers were challenging, but I found ways to adjust my behaviors and actions towards each child in order to communicate with them effectively. I communicated everything that happened each day to the parents or caretakers and set learning/behavior goals for each child with which I worked, growing the goals over the course of the program.		

AACOMAS

- For AACOMAS, there are two sections for listing your work and activities – Experiences and Achievements. You may list as many experiences as you would like and up to five achievements, each entry having a limit of 600 characters. Unlike the AMCAS application, there is no additional space given to describe your most meaningful activities.
- You may not include planned experiences or hours you anticipate spending on an activity in the coming months.
- Existing entries may not be modified after submission; however, you may enter a new experience after submission if necessary.

Organizing and Categorizing Entries:

The Categories

- You will categorize your activities to make them easier to read for admissions committees.
 - The category options are:

AMCAS Category Options	AACOMAS Category Options
List up to 15 Work/Activities:	List Experiences (no max.) + Achievements (max. 5):
Artistic Endeavors	Experiences:
Community Service/Volunteer - Medical/Clinical	Extracurricular Activities

Community Service/Volunteer - Not Medical/Clinical	Non-Healthcare Volunteer or Community Enrichment
Conferences Attended	Non-Healthcare Employment
Extracurricular Activities	Healthcare Experience
Hobbies	
Honors/Awards/Recognitions	Achievements:
Intercollegiate Athletics	Awards
Leadership - Not Listed Elsewhere	Honors
Military Service	Presentations
Other	Publications
Paid Employment - Medical/Clinical	Scholarships
Paid Employment - Not Medical/Clinical	
Physician Shadowing/Clinical Observation	
Presentations/Posters	
Publications	
Research/Lab	
Teaching/Tutoring/Teaching Assistant	

- For AAMCAS, the experiences listed will appear in chronological order by default, but AMCAS gives admissions committees the option to sort experiences by the above categories. As such, care should be taken when selecting categories. For AACOMAS, your experiences and achievements will not appear in any particular order.

When to Split or Combine Experiences

- There are times when it might be advantageous to combine multiple experiences in one entry. Examples:
 - You shadowed a number of physicians each for a relatively short amount of time and had little patient interaction.
 - UMass Memorial Medical Center, OB/GYN (Summer 2020) Shadowed patient consultations with 3 physicians. Primary Contact: Janet Smith, M.D.
Boston Medical Center, Cardiology (Summer 2021) Attended rounds and observed surgeries. Primary Contact: John Link, D.O.
 - You did a number of short volunteer experiences (walks for charity, river cleanups, etc.) It can be useful to condense these into one experience to avoid the appearance of trying to pad your resume.
- There are times when it might be advantageous to split one experience into multiple entries. Examples:
 - You shadowed one or more physicians for longer periods of time. For each entry, you should share an interesting observation and/or what the learning outcomes were.
 - You participated in an activity that had two distinct components, each with a different goal.
 - Example: You assisted with a postdoc's research and, later, completed your own thesis in the lab but on a different topic. Separating could be useful if you need more space to describe each component of the research. Be sure that when you list the time spent on each project that you are not double counting.
 - Example: You were deeply involved in many facets of UMass EMS. You might use one space to describe your patient interaction and another to describe your work on the e-Board. Again, be sure that the total time listed is accurate and not double counting hours.

AMCAS Honors and Awards

- For AAMCAS, where there is a 15 entry limit, honors and awards can often be combined into one entry. If space is tight, it is okay to delete less significant awards, especially those that are implied. For example, if you graduated summa cum laude, it is not *essential* to also mention that you earned Dean's List every semester.

- For AAMCAS, if an award is mentioned within the description of a different activity, for example, you earned an award for research and mentioned that in describing the research experience, it should not be listed again separately.
- When listing an honor or award, sharing what the qualifications were can be helpful. For example, was this award given to everyone with a certain GPA or was it given to 1 of 500 psychology majors based on grades, class participation, and professor evaluation? Similarly, if your honor involved being in the Commonwealth Honors College, explain what you learned from that experience.

Experience Type:	Honors/Awards/Recognitions	Most Meaningful Experience:	No
Experience Name:	Excellence in Biochemistry Award and The Honors College	Dates:	05/2020
Contact Name & Title:	Amy Springer, Lecturer/Chief Undergraduate Advisor	Total Hours:	0
Contact Email:	aspringer@umass.edu	Contact Phone:	4134068837
Organization Name:	UMass Amherst Biochemistry Department and Honors College		
City / State / Country:	Amherst / MA / United States of America (the)		
Experience Description:	The Excellence in Biochemistry Award is given to students in the Biochemistry Department that have shown successful academic rigor in the major and who have maintained above a 3.90 GPA. The department recognizes the hard work of the students, determining that they have demonstrated the best qualities in the department. Being a member of the Commonwealth Honors College brought me an education beyond science, leading to my personal growth, increasing my empathy towards other populations in our society, while also allowing me to understand viewpoints of others through a humanity perspective. We critically analyzed primary sources and held discussions in small class settings on various topics.		

Publications

- Use the AMA format to list publications. If there's an entry with many authors and you were one of the last authors, you can list the first three authors and then write et al. At the end of your entry you could write (9th author).
- If not all publications fit in one entry, use another entry.

Deciding what to Include:

- Include any experience that has been meaningful or that has taken a significant amount of time should be listed. This includes jobs in retail, customer service, etc. You can talk about how these roles grew your service orientation, teamwork skill, etc. and taught you to be patient with people even when they were not at their best.
- Not all spaces need to be filled. In fact, it would be better to leave some spaces empty than to start getting creative to fill the entries. Focus on sharing experiences that were actually significant to you in some way. For example, cleaning up a roadside for 4 hours one afternoon likely did little to shape you.
- The entries should list all of your experiences, including those that will be featured elsewhere (personal statement and secondary applications).
- Activities from college and beyond should be listed. Applicants should only include experiences from high school if they were continued during college.

Documenting Time Spent and Listing a Supervisor:

- Listing activities that will begin/continue after submission of the application. Start by reading the application instructions carefully.
 - For AMCAS, applicants may report hours for activities they have begun and plan to continue post submission in the "total hours" field. List the hours separately, so the admissions team can easily distinguish what will be done by the time of submission:

▪ Dates: 09/2019 – 06/2021	Total Hours: 210	[← Hours completed]
06/2021 – 07/2022	100	[← Hours anticipated]
 - For AACOMAS, applicants may not report future hours; however, within AACOMAS, new activities may be added after submission of the application.
- Be sure that the time spent on each activity listed makes sense and use a calculator to do so. Schools will add up how many hours each week you were participating in extracurricular activities, so the number should not be inflated.

- For most honors/awards, the time spent on the award would be listed as 0. If time is listed on an honor/award, it should not be duplicative of a previous entry. For example, if the applicant listed 400 hours on research and then has an award for the same research, the applicant should not list that the award took 400 hours. In this instance, the research took 400 hours and the award took 0 hours.
- When listing a supervisor for an activity, it is okay if the person does not know you well. You just need to list someone (ideally someone in a senior role) who can confirm that you participated in the activity. This is not the same as a recommendation. For a campus club, you can list the faculty advisor or an e-Board member. Medical schools only rarely contact supervisors.

Writing about Work & Activities

- This is a great time to highlight who you are and what values you prioritize. It is a time to demonstrate that you are strong in the [AAMC Core Competencies](#). This means choosing which experiences to highlight and taking time to decide what you want to say about each. Your descriptions should go well beyond what you did for most entries. The writing here, as with the rest of your application, should be flawless.
- Get started:
 - Write down all of your activities from college and beyond.
 - For AMCAS, determine the 15 most meaningful activities to include, combining similar activities (described above) as needed and as it makes sense to do so.
 - Categorize each activity (described above) and make sure you are covering each major category. In particular, you know you need substantial clinical experience.
 - Once you have selected what you want to include, write bullets of what you want to cover for each activity. This will ensure that you do not leave out the important details when you write each entry.
 - Time spent
 - Duties/Accomplishments
 - Impact
 - [AAMC Core Competencies](#) demonstrated
 - Write full descriptions for each activity including the information in the bullet points above. Most entries (besides listing awards, publications) should be full sentences. See the examples below.
 - While there will be a combination of showing and telling in the descriptions, showing is preferable when possible.
 - Telling: I put my patient at ease.
 - Showing: I asked my patient what music he liked, and we listened to that as we rode in the ambulance to the hospital. I continued to hold his hand and asked him questions about his dogs.
 - Descriptions should focus on your impact rather than your job description as much as possible. Yes, the committee needs to have a basic idea of what you do, but it is less helpful for them to know how well you fill coffee cups, use a pipette, or take blood pressure and more important for them to know that you are team-focused, culturally competent, service oriented, etc. These are skills that are much harder to teach people within the four years of medical school. Ask yourself:
 - What did you achieve or learn (especially about yourself) from an experience?
 - What values did you prioritize as you approached your work?
 - What value did you add to the position that, perhaps, someone else may not have?

Examples:

- Retail: Given that Target is an enormous store, I assisted customers in answering their questions and finding needed items. Often by the time they reached me, they already felt flustered, so I took time—as I escorted them to their desired item—to ask about their day. I took great pride in making the shopping experience a little less stressful for them and was especially proud when I could help a customer shift from tense or angry to smiling or laughing.

- **Research:** I worked closely with three other biochemistry majors on a custom project we chose and designed. We devised a strategy to convert the recently discovered CjCas9 protein into a Nickase to be a novel gene-editing tool. Although I was responsible for my portion of bench work, writing, and experimental design, teamwork on this project was essential since we were given a lot of independence. The lab taught me to support my teammates' ideas and take constructive feedback; however, I also learned to diplomatically discuss better options to teammates and ask critical questions, while participating in complex problem solving. We presented a poster defense on our research to professors and classmates.
- **UMass EMS:** I volunteered shifts for UMass events and acquired continuing education, including mass-causality and triage simulations. During one of my first shifts, a patient experienced a grand mal seizure. This situation gave me experience to be in the moment, adapting to the stress of the bystanders around me, and focusing only on what was necessary. This helped strengthen my ability to work with fellow EMTs and become more aware of adapting to these types of situations. I also worked as a CPR/First Aid instructor for people in the UMass community, making them better bystanders for possible future emergencies. This increased my teaching ability in relaying medical information to the general public.

Experience Entry Examples

Example 1: Barista at Coffee Shop

Pre-Writing:

- Time spent: 2 days/week, 8 hours/day, 2 summers
- Duties/Accomplishments: Greet and serve customers
- Impact: Made customers feel welcome while balancing many competing priorities in a fast-paced environment. Demonstrated integrity even when I was not afforded the same respect.
- [AAMC Core Competencies](#) demonstrated: Social skills, teamwork, cultural competence

Entry:

Serving coffee in downtown Boston over two summers taught me a great deal. I had to find ways to welcome customers from all over the country/world while being cognizant of the line out the door. In time, I learned to find quick points of connection—a joke, a smile, a brief chat about a local interest point—to put people at ease. I noticed that making this extra effort helped to reduce customers' frustration over long lines. Moreover, I looked for ways to build cohesiveness with my co-workers, asking about their days' and making time to support them. I found that when we worked well together using strong communication skills that we were able to serve our customers more quickly.

Example 2: Medical Assistant at Pediatric Office

Pre-Writing:

- Time spent: 5 days/week, 8 hours/day, 3 summers and breaks
- Duties/Accomplishments: Take vitals and medical history.
- Impact: Calmed parents when they were frustrated. Kept kids laughing and smiling even as I completed medical procedures
- [AAMC Core Competencies](#) demonstrated: Social skills, teamwork, cultural competence

Entry:

When I began as a medical assistant working in summers and breaks, I quickly adjusted to the fast-paced environment—needing to take vitals, complete a medical history, pull vaccines, etc.—for a new patient every 15 minutes. Juggling these responsibilities, though, while connecting with patients took time. I learned to do as much of the exam as possible with a baby clothed, to encourage parents to hold their toddlers to keep them feeling secure, and to explain as much as possible in age appropriate language before touching *anyone*. My greatest accomplishment is keeping a two year old smiling throughout an exam, even if it means belting out Disney songs for the duration of their visit.

Example 3: Mentor to Help Student Apply to College

Pre-Writing:

- Time spent: 1 day week, 2 hours/day, academic year, 3 years
- Duties/Accomplishments: Mentor one student through college application process (FAFSA, application, essays, scholarships). Helped mentee to select target schools.
- Impact: Reassured mentee that college was in reach and helped mentee gain entrance into college.
- [AAMC Core Competencies](#) demonstrated: Social skills, cultural competence, communication, reliability

Entry:

Every Wednesday for three years, I mentored a high school senior—three in total—through the college application process. While we worked through the essays, the FAFSA, and more, I found that my being trustworthy, reliable, and open were essential for empowering the students (first in their families to attend college) to share the intimate details of their lives needed to apply. I always made time to ask about how my mentee was doing not only in school but also more broadly. Each of my mentees made it to college, and I remain in contact with them, continuing to cheer them on toward their goals. Also, in my second year of volunteering, I created a college essay workshop for all of the mentees.

Selecting and Describing Your Most Meaningful Activities for AMCAS

Selecting Your Most Meaningful Activities

- When selecting your three most meaningful activities, you should truly choose the three activities that shaped you most. That said, here are a couple helpful hints:
 - At least one of your three meaningful activities should involve helping patients. You want to be a doctor, so admissions committees will be confused if working with patients is not meaningful to you.
 - Meaningful activities should focus on *you*. Rarely would you want to choose a standard shadowing experience as a most meaningful activity because in a typical shadowing scenario, *you* are not doing anything. You are watching someone else do things. The application should focus on your impact.
 - If you have written about an activity in your personal statement, there is no rule about whether it should or should not be listed as a most meaningful activity. If you do write about the same activity twice, you are likely selecting it because it meant a lot to you, and you have enough to say about it that you do not have to repeat yourself (much).
 - Only on rare occasions should an honor or award be listed as “most meaningful.” A time when it might be listed as most meaningful is if it represents having conquered a major obstacle or having grown in an exceptional way.
- You are not required to have a letter of recommendation from every person who has supervised one of your meaningful activities.

Describing Your Most Meaningful Activities

- With the 1,325 character limit, you have ample time to describe more deeply your impact at an activity in addition to how that activity helped you to grow. Ideally, you can talk about how this growth will help you as a doctor, but that is not essential if it does not flow naturally.
- Again, this section can be a combination of showing and telling with a preference toward showing. Given the extra space, a quick anecdote can be useful in illustrating what you are trying to describe. That said, there is no expectation that a story shared will be catchy in the same way that your personal statement is. Given the limited space here, the focus needs to be on communicating your growth and impact, not your prose.

Example 1:

Experience Type: Research/Lab

Experience Name: Undergraduate Research Assistant

Most Meaningful Experience: Yes

Organization Name: UMass Amherst Department of Sociology

Experience Description:

This research is designed to study the patterns of weight-related behaviors. It involves observing a diverse adolescent population. Through my involvement in this research, I have become proficient in various skills: facilitating focus groups, accurately transcribing data, and statistically analyzing data. Learning about real-world statistics and interpreting their significance has enabled me to learn about health disparities, especially in low-income neighborhoods. As part of this project, I have been fortunate enough to tutor adolescents and connect these students with valuable resources such as academic help, as well as providing a first-hand account of my path to college.

Most Meaningful Remarks:

Being part of the research lab taught me how to be both prepared and adaptable. To have a focus group go smoothly, I needed to figure out what I wanted to say and also to understand the bigger implications of the project. That combination of preparation allowed me to pivot when, inevitably, the students I was working with answered in a way I had not anticipated. The experience also showed me how important it was to adapt my language and demeanor based on the demographic I was trying to approach from youth to teachers to principals to professors. I could not assume that adolescents would understand complex jargon; I could not expect them to give me honest responses without making an effort to put them at ease first. To be effective, I also had to build rapport with teachers and principals as they knew the students best and could give me insight into how to approach the situation. The experience has shaped how I will approach being a pediatrician, having shown me to adapt to my approach given the age of my patient and having taught me the integral importance of having those who support youth on my team, in this case teachers but in the future parents.

Example 2:

Experience Type: Community Service/Volunteer - Medical/Clinical

Experience Name: Volunteer at Massachusetts General Hospital

Most Meaningful Experience: Yes

Organization Name: Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH)

Experience Description:

When I began volunteering at MGH during high school, I never thought that it would be something that I would continue to do for years to come. I quickly found that I loved being a patient rounder—checking in with patients to see if there was anything I could do or bring to make them more comfortable. Not providing medical care to patients, I initially wondered if my position at the hospital was making any difference at all. But after volunteering in the emergency room, surgical floor, pediatrics, and maternity floors, I saw how even something small like a warm blanket or a brief chat with a patient really could make patients feel more comfortable in the chaotic hospital environment.

Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:

Volunteering at the hospital has been particularly meaningful for me because I have had the time to talk to patients and ask about their experiences. I initially wanted to enter this field to help people heal. The longer I am in this role, the more I see that healing is only one aspect of medicine. I often hear family members grumbling about costs or confused

about is happening with their loved one. Having the space to listen and hear patients made me realize that I must prioritize making patients feel seen and heard. I must be willing to teach them and advocate on their behalves. The experience motivated me to work with the Volunteer Coordinator at MGH and gain permission to volunteer additionally with a weekly patient and family support group, where I had the opportunity to empathize with people during some of their most vulnerable moments with the hope of providing them some comfort.

Example 3:

Experience Type: Paid Employment - Medical/Clinical

Experience Name: Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

Most Meaningful Experience: Yes

Organization Name: Armstrong Ambulance

Experience Description:

I worked 221 hours at Armstrong and 240 hours during the EMT clinical certification course from the previous summer, including 4 hours of shadowing a physician at Boston Medical Trauma Center. Through Armstrong, I worked as an EMT by transferring patients and attending 911 calls. I became an empathetic listener to each patient's personal and medical story. It was important to realize that every patient came from a different ethnic, racial, or cultural background. When UMass closed due to COVID-19 and I could no longer afford to stay isolated from my high-risk parents, I stopped taking shifts. Per their physicians, it was advised that I wait for things to settle down before doing more shifts.

Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:

It was a typical summer day when I arrived at Armstrong for one of my shifts. When I sat in the lunchroom my partner came running towards me. "We have a 7-car MVA off of Interstate 93". On the way to the scene, my thoughts were all scrambled as I tried to count on my fingers what I would need from the truck when we arrived to the accident. Upon arrival, there was a sea of cars, lights, and paramedics. On scene, I felt like I was doing a hundred tasks at once; it seemed impossible.

I did not know what it meant to "think on my feet" until I became an EMT. This MVA was my first major call at Armstrong, and my first trauma response. There was no time to second-guess any decisions or to think ahead. It was difficult to ignore all of the frantic bystanders and other stressed EMTs. Two things were clear from this accident: first, communication with my partner, paramedics, and ER nurses/physicians was essential if an accurate story and all accurate medical information was to be recorded. Second, even with all the background mayhem, treating patients, following ethical protocol to give them the highest quality care, and working effectively with my partner remained essential. Being an EMT provided me with moments to test my accountability and teamwork skills during some of the most stressful circumstances.

Example 4:

Experience Type: Research/Lab

Experience Name: Lead Undergraduate Researcher in Kinesiology

Most Meaningful Experience: Yes

Organization Name: UMass Kinesiology Department

Experience Description:

I started as a lab assistant and then became a paid research fellow, helping graduate students with their studies and attending lab meetings with the principal investigator (PI). I eventually designed my own thesis, studying head and pelvis stability on a split-belt treadmill (legs walking at different speeds). I determined if the head and pelvis adapt to split-belt walking and if head and pelvis stability is learned and stored in the brain over time. I wrote my own grant and thesis for this project. Since some stroke patients walk similarly to a split-belt pattern, this research may provide insight into how new stroke patients can rehabilitate walking mechanics and become more stable.

Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:

“Ready? I am turning on the treadmill now,” my PI said as I prepared myself. Not knowing what to expect, I started walking as I would around campus; however, after 5 seconds, my right leg gave out from under me. It felt like my legs were tied to different ropes moving in opposite directions. “What’s happening!” I exclaimed. “Your right leg is moving twice as fast,” she said. After 30 seconds, it felt like my walking returned to normal, but the treadmill was still in a split-belt mode. In disbelief, I asked many follow-up questions. At that moment, I knew I wanted to pursue human-based research and chose the UMass Kinesiology Laboratory.

I not only acquired an appreciation as a subject, but learning how a “blind” subject felt enabled me to improve interactions with my own human test subjects when conducting research for my thesis. Many situations involving subjects, equipment, or software increased my independent problem-solving ability. I also needed to apply advanced scientific principles into methods and data analyses by discussing literature through weekly journal clubs with graduate students and the PI, educating me in various studies in the field of Kinesiology and medicine. I produced my own manuscript, giving me insight into the dedication and time needed for research.

Example 5:

Experience Type: Community Service/Volunteer - Not Medical/Clinical

Experience Name: Program Volunteer and Science Coordinator

Most Meaningful Experience: Yes

Organization Name: Visual Impairment Program (VIP), Newton Public Schools

Experience Description:

This program is designed to extend the core curriculum for children ages 4 to 14 with visual impairments. In high school, I began working one-on-one with students and increased my responsibilities to lead larger groups during college. In 2019, I became the volunteer Science Coordinator. After talking to a variety of teachers, I realized that academic students with visual impairments are disadvantaged in the STEM curriculum during school and are one of the least represented groups in STEM professions; therefore, I accepted a leadership role within the team, designing and teaching a science-based program. The students became empowered to continue their growth in the public-school curriculum.

Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:

I designed and led a hands-on science museum for the students, taking them and the museum to preschoolers, giving younger audiences an opportunity to learn science from older peers. I worked directly with my students and the preschoolers. Creating lessons and exhibits was challenging because I had to adjust difficulty for all age levels, visual impairments, and other disabilities. I took into account each student’s background in science, their culture and environment at home, and their support network so they could all achieve a level of academic growth. I grew the students’ confidence in explaining scientific material to a younger audience, which increased my own ability in relaying STEM to my students.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 summer was especially difficult. I advocated to continue the science curriculum remotely, making fun videos in which I presented experiments and lessons. Students did a version of the activity at home. I worked with the teaching staff to write a grant for funding so we could create daily science kits and then we sent these packages to every student. The remote structure required me to realize each child’s ability to work at home and consider differences in their support network and socioeconomic background, making sure every student had an equitable experience.