

Unique Characteristics Section of MSPE Some Guidelines and Suggestions

We would like you to draft your own personalized Unique Characteristics section, using the outline that follows below. Please remember that you want to present yourself as succinctly and eloquently as possible, and that the length of your Unique Characteristics section will not usually exceed one page (about 2000 characters or less).

Please do not include anything irrelevant, or content you would not feel comfortable discussing in an interview (too personal or emotional).

There will be four main paragraphs of varying lengths, as follows:

1. Background
2. High School (short)
3. College (a bit longer than high school section)
4. Medical School (longest)

This section will spotlight your strengths and accomplishments, and highlight areas in your history that help you to stand out as a candidate. Please follow closely the following outline, and please remember to only include information that you would want your interviewers to read in your MSPE!

Paragraph 1 (Background and Childhood)-Some considerations include:

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. Who were the people who raised you, or with whom you lived before age 18?
3. Anything that you would like to share about their educations or occupations?
4. What language or languages were spoken at home?
5. Were there any unique circumstances, opportunities, etc. you'd like to share about yourself or your family (e.g., fled persecution and emigrated from another country, 1st person to go to college, hardships you or your family overcame, unusual circumstances, etc.)?
6. What significant influences or obstacles did you or your family encounter during your childhood?
7. Significant events or influences in your life that had an impact on your subsequent career choice

Paragraph 2 (High School Years)-Some considerations include:

1. Where did you attend high school?
2. Briefly describe significant accomplishment(s), if any, in the following categories:
 - a. Academics (Valedictorian or honors/awards)
 - b. Leadership (Class President, team captain)
 - c. Athletics/Community service/Religious/ (describe only what you would want to discuss in an interview)
3. Briefly describe influences or obstacles you encountered during high school, if any (ex: loss of a loved one; language, cultural or socioeconomic barriers, a learning disability, etc.)
4. Significant events or influences in your life in high school that had an impact on your subsequent career choice

Paragraph 3 (College Years)-Some considerations include:

1. Where did you attend college?
2. What was your major? What was your minor (if any)?
3. Briefly describe significant accomplishment(s), if any, in the following categories:
 - a. Academics (Phi Beta Kappa, *magna cum laude*, etc.)
 - b. Leadership (Class President, Founder of organization, etc.)
 - c. Athletics/ Community service/Religious activities (describe only what you would want to talk about extensively in an interview)
 - d. Research, specifically if it pertains to medicine
4. Briefly describe influences or obstacles you encountered during college, if any (ex: loss of a loved one; language, cultural or socioeconomic barriers, a learning disability, etc.)
5. Significant events or influences in your life during college that had an impact on your subsequent career choice
6. Please list part time jobs and full time jobs (and hours/week you worked) during college, if any.
7. Time off between college and medical school? How was it spent? (Work, research, travel, another career before medical school, etc.)

Paragraph 4 (Medical School):

1. If dual degree, please describe degree (MBA, MPH, MPP, MSTP, other) and school
2. Briefly describe any significant accomplishments in the following categories:
 - a. Academics (Letters of Distinction)
 - b. Leadership (Class Officer, Interest Group Coordinator, etc.)
 - c. Extracurricular activities related to career choice (Interest Groups, Student Orgs, etc.)
 - d. Community service/Religious/Athletics (describe only what you would want to discuss in an interview)
 - e. Research, if any
3. Briefly describe influences or obstacles you encountered during medical school, if any.

Sample Unique Characteristics Section

We are pleased to offer this Medical Student Performance Evaluation for Joe Bruin as a candidate for your post-graduate training program. Joe was born and raised in California by parents who immigrated to the United States in pursuit of a higher education. The family experienced significant difficulties accessing health care, given limited finances and daunting cultural and language barriers when Joe was a child. Joe cites his parents for instilling in him the values of a tireless work ethic, a devotion to family, and an appreciation for the value of a strong education.

Joe spent his formative years in Los Angeles, California, where he flourished, quickly moving to the top of his class and graduating as Valedictorian of his high school. He realized at a young age that he had a passion for the sciences, leading him to found the “Biology Society” at his school. He was also President of the Math Council, Vice-President of the Community Service Club, and the Captain of the varsity soccer team.

Joe attended the University of California, Los Angeles, where he majored in Bioengineering and graduated *magna cum laude*. He served as president of the Premedical Student Group, and he was a member of the Golden Key Honors Society. He was the recipient of numerous scholarships, including a summer research grant that allowed him to conduct a study in UCLA’s Department of Neurobiology. This work resulted in a presentation at the UCLA Undergraduate Research Symposium. He also devoted himself to his community, mentoring and tutoring underserved 4th and 5th graders at his former elementary school.

While in medical school, Joe has continued to distinguish himself academically, while making significant contributions to the community. Over the years he was coordinator of the Family Medicine Interest Group, and he served as Vice-President of the school’s American Medical Student’s Association (AMSA) chapter. Joe has also volunteered for the UCLA Mobile Clinic, delivering health care to the homeless population in West Hollywood. In the research arena, Joe worked closely with faculty members in the Department of Family Medicine to study the impact of a smoking cessation program, resulting in a presentation at the Josiah Brown Poster Fair. Of note, Joe received a Letter of Distinction in Family Medicine, which in our pass/fail system, is our way of acknowledging a truly extraordinary performance on the required clinical clerkships.