

## Dental School Personal Statement Examples

### Example 1:

"In the final moments of a key game in a hockey tournament, I jumped over the boards and onto the ice without putting my mouth guard back in place. It was attached to my helmet, but I had a chance for the puck, and I took it. Moments later, an opponent's stick caught me in the face, knocking out my front tooth. Play stopped, and my team found my tooth on the ice. I looked to the bleachers. My mom was already on the phone getting initial instructions from our dentist for saving the tooth. Within 15 minutes, we were outside the clinic as my dentist unlocked the door, despite it being a Saturday night. As I was treated within half an hour, my tooth could be saved by stabilizing it as it healed. Until that moment, I thought of my dentist as someone I only saw every six months; I hadn't seen her as a critical part of my healthcare team.

I realized from this experience that time is a factor in dental care, and thus a career in dentistry. My tooth was saved because I lived in an urban centre and had immediate access to care, not to mention the continuity of care I've had since I was a child. My mother is employed and has good dental coverage, but this is not the case for many. Without timely check-ups, both oral and medical issues that could be detected and prevented can become more serious conditions.

With this awareness, I have for the last 6 years volunteered in two ways. In the time since my hockey accident, I've worked with my dentist on a safety awareness campaign for young hockey players and their families, teaching about the necessity of mouth guards, as well as how a quick response to such injuries may help in recovery. I've also worked alongside dentists for the Smiling Children Foundation in vulnerable neighborhoods, where dental neglect is not uncommon, and continuity of care is rare. Recently, we set up a mobile clinic in a school, where I record personal information and take a medical history for each child. A young boy, 10 years old, complained of constant headaches and pain in his body. Upon examination, the dentist noticed his gums were dark purple in places and bled easily. Our team alerted a community doctor of a potential immune disorder, and the young boy was diagnosed and treated, returning to good health within months. That day, I learned that oral healthcare is holistic healthcare, and that it is a privilege to support those who may not have time, resources, or access to oral healthcare.

I have had this privilege in what began as dental shadowing and is now part-time employment, where I liaise between patients and insurance companies, manage team schedules, and comfort anxious patients. This might be as simple as holding a hand while the dentist performs the procedure. Or, I might hold a baby while the father sees the hygienist. I've learned to read an X-ray accurately, prepare the instruments needed for a procedure, and balance the books. I have been mentored by both a medical and business professional, and I have borne witness to our patients' high and low points. I have worked hard to understand what goes into growing and maintaining a successful dental practice and feel capable to meet the challenge of the multiple roles required in this dynamic vocation.

It bears mentioning why my first-year grades are not what I'd hoped they would be. I joined a good number of co-curricular clubs with the intention of participating in our campus community and developing my professional skills. By midterm, I realized I had oversubscribed myself.

Unfortunately, willpower and desire were not enough. My grades suffered as I tried to manage my responsibilities. By attending time management seminars and learning to manage time rather than be managed by time, I was able retrieve my grades. From 2nd year forward, I've maintained a 4.0 GPA while moving up the ranks of student organizations and taking an active role in a research project. Resilience is like a muscle that needs time, exercise, and perseverance to build.

From a sports accident, to volunteer work in an underserved community, to employment in a dental office and an academic career that shows both mistakes and recovery, I have thought carefully about what dentistry is. A dentist is part of a larger healthcare team, and a dentist can often treat not only a single patient over decades, but provide intergenerational care to a family. I aspire to dentistry to accompany my patients through life, 6 months at a time, offering compassionate, and whole-person healthcare."

### **Example 2:**

"“Ready, Set, Bake,” shouted the host of Bake-Off. I was 16 and a contestant of a televised baking show. Our 6th challenge gave us 3 hours to perfectly bake the most decadent and timing consuming dessert: the mille-feuille – layers of puff pastry, filled with whipped cream and custard, and glazed on top. Despite being the only teenager in a field of contestants ranging from 20-70 years of age, I'd made it through several days of cuts for one of the spots on the show. I wish I could say that my dessert was a masterpiece, but as the timer counted down and I plated it, the filling oozed, and the pastry crumbled. I'd made to the Top Six, but the mille-feuille defeated me and I was asked to hang up my apron. As I reflect on this experience, the solo and team challenges, the practice to get on the show, the mastery needed to gain a top spot, I realize that I'm grateful even for the defeat, because I learned valuable lessons that helped me develop key qualities and skills that are in-line with the core competencies necessary for dentistry, my chosen profession. Both dentistry and competitive baking require innovation and excellence, communication and accountability, and the necessity of precision, focus, and a steady hand.

Both of my parents are dentists. While the influence of their careers on my own access to knowledge cannot be underestimated, I have been deeply cognizant of making an autonomous career decision. That decision is my own, but my parents have admittedly opened unique conversations around ethics, technology, and patient care to me. My earliest memories include attending dental conferences with them and being encouraged to explore the Exhibits Floor, where I learned about the newest dental products and treatments and “test drove” the latest innovations in dentistry. I developed an aptitude for predicting which products and technologies were gimmicks and which would effectively support excellence in patient care. This knack has made me something of an informal consultant for my parents and their colleagues, who value my insights on innovation and efficacy of new treatments.

While technology is at the forefront of change, what remains consistent over time is the importance of communication and accountability to provide excellent patient care. I've had the privilege to shadow Dr. Ann Lee, an oral surgeon, over the past 3 years. Among many things, she showed me that inherent in communication is accountability. Many of her patients are children and teens

having teeth extracted for orthodontic reasons. The son of a family who had been Dr. Lee's patients for over a decade arrived for a complicated wisdom tooth extraction. Despite familiarity with the family, the doctor painstakingly reviewed the extraction process to prepare them effectively. The procedure went well in the office; however, on the way home, the boy began haemorrhaging. An artery had been compromised during the surgery. I watched as Dr. Lee packed bone wax around the artery to stem the bleeding. What struck me about this experience was the standard of accountability to which the surgeon held herself, as she communicated with the family by phone, made a house call later that evening on her way home, and remained on-call over the weekend to ensure the safety and healing of the child. The family maintained their trust in Dr. Lee because of her open communication and sense of accountability. I also learned just how fragile and technical dental work is, requiring both dexterity and precision.

Volunteering in a dental brigade in Haiti, Mirlande, 6, taught me about vulnerability and trust. Mirlande was scared and reluctant to open her mouth for her first dental exam. I took her aside and, as she watched, I carved a perfect tooth from soap using dental instruments. I carved slowly and precisely, and then presented her with the gift. She put the tooth in her pocket and then allowed me to clean her teeth. I was immediately struck by the vulnerability of not only soft tissue, but of hearts, as she leaned back and opened her mouth in trust. This moment solidified my decision to become a dentist.

Though the earlier comparison between baking and dentistry is merely an analogy, it is one that suggests I have developed key skills and am aware of the core competencies a dentist must hold to best serve their patients professionally and ethically. Dentistry is my vocation, baking a hobby, but both speak to my investment in excellence, precision, and doing for others."