

Residency statements (called personal statements, letters of intent, and essays) are usually about one page long, and do three things. First, they give you a chance to introduce yourself to a Residency Director and discuss the person behind the activities and achievements listed on your CV. You do this by illuminating why these experiences are personally meaningful, and how they have developed your definition and philosophy of the qualities you strive for as a dentist. Second, they are an opportunity to state your case about why you feel your skills, experiences and perspective will directly contribute to their program. Third, they explain your reasons for seeking residency, and how they relate to your long-term goals.

In fact, a strong statement is rather like a “pre-interview”, responding to questions often asked in interviews, such as: Tell me a little about yourself. What are you looking for in a residency program? What do you feel you would bring to our program? What are you most proud of? Tell me about your most challenging experience and how you overcame it.

Below we have dissected a strong statement. It is strong because it is:

1. Personal (using detailed examples from the writer’s experience)
2. Well-organized (with a clear theme explored in a straight-forward fashion)
3. Largely centered around the three points mentioned above (definition of the qualities of an excellent dentist, strength of the candidate, reasons for choosing this particular residency)

These qualities also make it unique. In the end, it should be clear by the examples, the focus, and the ‘voice’, that only this candidate could have written this essay, which speaks to the candidate’s sincerity. This is what helps a Residency Director distinguish you from other candidates, and see you as an individual as well as a competent and motivated applicant.

The Opening Paragraph: Alex gives us their unique perspective

Alex Parker

There is a common duality between superheroes and endodontists. Both are humbled and persevere to help those in need. As a child, I’ve always been fascinated by tales of superheroes and what superheroes metaphorically represent in our society. Much like superheroes, endodontists are viewed as the last beacon of hope to “rescue” teeth potentially doomed to worse fates. I am fascinated by the fact that endodontists are counted on in times of need when there are limited options available. Endodontists are looked to for particularly challenging cases, including retreats and unnavigable canals. It is the mystery behind these challenging cases that peak my interest. The combination of technology, lifelong learning, and the altruistic nature of the field are the reasons why my interest is captivated by the specialty of endodontics.

WHY ARE THESE STRONG SUMMARY PARAGRAPHS?

- A. **Format-wise:** Alex quickly catches the reader with an interesting and thought provoking comparison between superheroes and endodontists.
- B. **Content-wise:** Alex provides a framework for the main points they will make in the statement and their reasons for choosing endodontics: technology; lifelong learning; altruism.

Main Themes: Technology and Life-long Learning

Growing up, Iron Man was always one of my favorite superheroes that inspired me. Iron Man as at the forefront of technology and was always poised to help in any way possible. The field of endodontics, just like Iron Man, represents a culmination of modern technology and advances in cutting-edge science. **The extent to which endodontics uses both technology and science is part of what captivates me.** Not only that, it allows us as providers to bring the highest quality of care to the patient. The blossoming field of regenerative endodontics specifically highlights these advances. During [Name of Conference] in [Month/Year of Conference], I sat in on the lecture: [Name of Endodontics-Focused Lecture], which illustrated the significance behind new research and the potential implications of these scientific advances on an ever-changing industry. **This lecture changed the way I view research and opened my eyes to how the contributions from one study can have a ripple effect on the field of dentistry. More than ever, I now realize how important it is as a professional to keep myself updated on current literature in order to provide the highest quality care.**

Main Themes: Altruism and Interest in Endodontics

It was not long into dental school when I discovered the appealing nature of endodontics. The microscopic details in the craft, the precision in the art of a flawless root canal and the gratification from resolving dental infections are only small fractions of the appealing nature of the specialty. **The appreciation and gratitude from patients after resolving their pain only reinforces the altruistic charisma of endodontics. This enthusiasm to help others has motivated me to pursue future ambitions to work in a community clinic and pursue a career in teaching.** My current work in a community clinic has made me realize the difficulty of managing tough cases. This work has prepared me to understand the necessity to be creative when it comes to new clinical challenges. In the endodontic world, I know similar challenges will always present themselves. The willingness to treat these types of cases requires patience and resiliency, something which I fully understand and am willing to whole-heartedly commit to. Superheroes

WHY IS THIS A STRONG PARAGRAPH?

- A. **Format-wise:** The use of the Iron Man analogy is an effective transition from the superheroes mentioned in the first paragraph to the use of technology in this paragraph.
- B. **Content-wise:** This statement introduces Alex's understanding of endodontics. It also illustrates that their desire to enter the field stems from the specialty's use of technology and science.

Alex uses an example to show their interest in endodontics-focused research and how they sought out an additional endodontics experience. It also reinforces their dedication to lifelong learning.

WHY IS THIS A STRONG PARAGRAPH?

- A. **Format-wise:** The introductory sentences detail Alex's desire to become an endodontist.
- B. **Content-wise:** Alex brings back the theme of altruism they mentioned in the opening paragraph and wants the residency director to know that their desire to become an endodontist is rooted in serving others.

Content-wise: Here we learn what Alex will bring to a residency program.

are idolized for their persistence to approach and overcome challenges, and in that same way endodontists personify this same persistence to surmount every case they treat. In your residency program, I strive to learn about pragmatic and efficient techniques to best approach each case in order to become a “hero” to patients. What separates superheroes from the norm is their ability to adapt to difficult situations and their tact ability to always do the right thing in tough situations. Your program will help instill in me invaluable insight to gain the clinical ability to correctly treat and appropriately adapt to difficult complex endodontic cases; to give me the tools to always do the right thing. I want to develop these skills because I know that without them I won’t be able to give quality care at the highest level and provide to those that have difficulty accessing the care they need. In every superhero story, there is a moment where the hero has a sense of higher calling to uphold. Choosing the path to endodontics has always been my calling.

**WHY IS THIS A STRONG
PARAGRAPH (CONT)**

Alex discusses how completing a residency will help them enhance their skills and is clear that their future plans are centered around completing this residency.

Alex Parker

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