DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH

- This presentation is meant to serve as a resource during this application cycle.
  - It does **NOT** cover all aspects of the application, so you must do your own research!
  - Review the [OptomCAS Instructions](#) for more detailed information.
  - You can also **contact OptomCAS for further assistance** (please read [FAQ](#) first):
    - **Phone:** 617–612–2888 (applicant inquiries only)
    - **Email:** optomcasinfo@optomcas.org
    - **Hours of operation:** Monday – Friday (9:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time)

- OptomCAS verification process may take up to six weeks after your application, transcripts, and payment are received.

- [Directory of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#)
- [Deadlines and Requirements](#)
- [School and College Prerequisites](#)
- [Letters of Evaluation](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Applicant Responsibilities](#)
- [How OptomCAS GPAs are Calculated](#)
BEFORE YOU APPLY

We recommend that you register for the ASCO Optometry Virtual Fair.
This event begins June 12, 2018

ASCO YOUTUBE CHANNEL
WHEN TO APPLY/CHECKLIST

- OptomCAS Opens: June 28, 2018.
- Before this date, you should have:
  - Completed all pre-OAT prerequisite courses listed on the [Pre-Optometry Quick Facts Sheet](#) and have a plan to complete the rest of the required prerequisite courses for all optometry schools that you wish to apply. View the [ASCO General and School-Specific Prerequisites](#).
  - Generated an [OATPIN](#)
  - Taken or scheduled the OAT
  - Asked your (4) evaluators to write letters of recommendation (typically, one optometrist, two hard science professors and one professional letter). Review the [Letters of Evaluation Requirements](#) for each school or college of optometry to which you are interested in applying.
  - Completed your personal statement (4500 characters max)
  - Compiled your resume
  - Documented your shadowing hours with an optometrist
  - Printed out an unofficial transcript to help you list your courses within the application
  - OptomCAS recommends you use the most up-to-date versions of Firefox or Google Chrome
  - Read the [Applicant Responsibilities](#) checklist for OptomCAS
  - Review [ASCO Functional Standards](#)
CREATING AN ACCOUNT

- Click [here](#) to create an OptomCAS account.
  - Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the “Login to the 2018-2019 OptomCAS Application.” It will take you to the application login where you will create your account.
  - [Applying to OptomCAS FAQs](#)
I applied to OptomCAS last year and would like to reapply. What information can be carried over to my current application?

- All applicants who have created a log in will be able to carry forward the information that they have previously entered. Applicants are able to log in with the same username and password used previously, and will be able to select the information to be carried forward.

- **Please note:** References will not be carried forward for any applicants. Transcripts submitted to OptomCAS will only be carried forward for applicants who were previously VERIFIED.
**REAPPLYING TO OPTOMCAS**

- I am no longer in touch with my evaluators. Can OptomCAS carry over my letters of evaluation?
  - No. Under NO circumstances can OptomCAS carry over any of your letters of evaluation from a previous application. These must be resubmitted for the new cycle.

- Do I need to resend transcripts I had sent last year?
  - If your application was not verified in the previous cycle, you will be required to submit transcripts from each institution that you have attended.

[Reapplying to OptomCAS FAQs](#)
PROGRAM SELECTION

- Once you have created an account, you must select at least one optometry school or college to which you will be applying.

- It is best to add all programs you are applying to at this point. You can always add more programs later on, or remove a program prior to submission of the application if you opt not to apply to this program. Once you have added one or more programs to which you are applying, you will need to review the list of designations schools and colleges, and then advance to the application.
SCHOOL SELECTION

- **APPLICATION FEES**
  - 1 school: $175
  - Each additional school: $70
  - Application Fees FAQs

- Average applicant applies to 7-10 schools
  - 10 schools: $805 (Under the Submit Application tab you can see the total cost before you confirm your application)

- **APPLY EARLY!**
  - Since optometry school acceptance is done on a ROLLING BASIS, applicants who submit early are more successful in being invited to interviews and considered for scholarships first. Please note that there are exceptions. For example, UC Berkeley is not based on rolling admissions. They expect all applications to be submitted by a certain date.
  - Once your application becomes complete (application submitted and all official transcripts received) it can take 4 – 6 business weeks for your application to be verified.
PERSONAL INFORMATION SECTION

- This section includes:
  - Release Statement
  - Biographic Information
  - Contact Information
  - Citizenship Information
  - Race & Ethnicity
  - Other Information.
- Proofread your application for accuracy and grammatical errors.
OTHER INFORMATION

Enter in this section, your:

- Military status
- Any felony and misdemeanor convictions
- Any academic and license infractions
- Previous applications to dental school
- Previous attendance in a Health Profession Program
- Any education interruption
- Any additional information
ACADEMIC HISTORY SECTION

- In this section, choose **COLLEGES ATTENDED**
  - **ADD A COLLEGE** for UGA and any other schools you have attended.
  - Click [here](#) for further details

- OptomCAS will **NOT** process any document that is received **prior to June 28, 2019**.
  - Documentation received earlier than this **date will be discarded**.
TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

- Transcript verification can take **six weeks**, so make submitting transcripts your **FIRST** priority upon creating an account. Click [here](#) for details on ordering your transcripts.

- **ELECTRONIC TRANSCRIPTS:** OptomCAS only accepts electronic Transcripts through Credential Solutions and Parchment.
  - **Credential Solutions:** To determine if your college or university participates in this service, please click the Credential Solutions directory.
  - **Parchment:** To determine if your college or university participates in this service, please click the Parchment website.
  - If your institution is not listed in the Credential Solutions Directory or the Parchment Directory, arrange for the registrar to mail an official transcript directly to OptomCAS using the OptomCAS Transcript Request Form.
  - All transcripts MUST be sent to OptomCAS for each school you have attended (even dual enrollment). Only original, official transcripts will be accepted. The application cannot be processed without official transcripts sent directly to OptomCAS. If you are mailing your transcript, please mail it to the address below:

  **OptomCAS Transcript Processing Center**
  **P.O. Box 9119**
  **Watertown, MA 02471**
TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

- Click **DOWNLOAD TRANSCRIPT REQUEST FORM**: Generate a request form for each institution and provide it to the university Registrar’s Office to submit with the official transcript.
- **Colleges Attended FAQs**
- **Print Transcript Matching Forms FAQs**
- **Click here** for a video walkthrough of the transcript entry process.
TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

In Athena choose the **Student tab** and click on **Student Records**, then choose **Request Official Transcripts**. It will redirect you to the **My UGA Portal** where you will need to log in with your student ID and password. Once you have done so, choose the Parchment Icon.

Once you click on the Parchment icon it will direct you to another page. Type in **OptomCAS** under institution and follow the instructions. Remember **DO NOT** send your transcripts before the application opens.
TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

• Read the directions carefully and double check that the destination is correct.

• Under Order Options you will choose “Graduate/Professional,” under Purpose of Transcript.

• Under the Attachment section, you will upload your transcript matching form before processing your order. If you are requesting a transcript from another institution you will need to ask them how they would like to receive your transcript matching form.

• Please Note: If you are not able to attach your Transcript Matching Form you will not be able to continue and you will be asked to enter the barcode manually. Once you enter the barcode you can then proceed to check out in order to complete your order. You must enter the barcode in the exact format it is listed on the Transcript Matching Form.

• Example: 9335870187-1599229-X
TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

- Three things to ensure you successfully match your transcript to your application:
  1. List the institution in the Colleges Attended section.
  2. Make sure you download the Transcript Request form for each institution.
  3. Request ALL transcripts the moment the application opens.

NOTE: Please list any alternate names used such as nickname, maiden name, or name variance in the Alternate Name field under the Biographic section of the application.

- It is your responsibility to monitor you application for transcript receipt.
  - OptomCAS will NOT notify applicants concerning missing transcripts.
  - If it has been longer than 10 business days since the transcript was mailed and it has not been posted—resubmit. The status of all transcripts can be viewed in the CHECK STATUS tab.
TRANSCRIPT FAQ

• Can I print one transcript request form and send it to all the colleges I attended?
  • No. Each institution attended has a unique transcript matching form created specifically for that institution.

• If I have attended multiple institutions, do I need to send a transcript from each school?
  • Yes. All applicants are required to send ONE transcript from each institution attended regardless of the number of courses taken.

• I have transfer credits that appear on my primary transcript. Do I still have to send a transcript from the transferring institution?
  • Yes. OptomCAS requires an official transcript from every institution attended.

• What should I do if my transcript(s) are not received by OptomCAS?
  • If it has been longer than 10 business days since the transcript was mailed and it has not been posted—resubmit. The status of all transcripts can be viewed in the CHECK STATUS tab.

• U.S. and Canadian Official Transcripts FAQs
COURSEWORK ENTRY STEP-BY-STEP

- Obtain an unofficial transcript for each college-level institution you have attended. Use the transcript and the UGA Bulletin to complete this section.
- Complete the “Colleges Attended” section.
- Entering Coursework:
  - Add a term for the first institution. Term choices are Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer or Interim. Academic Choices are Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate and Post baccalaureate (In general, four-year students list one year per designation and five-year students list their last two years as senior).
  - Add all courses for the new term. Use a recent copy of the transcript to enter the course code, course title, subject, credits and grade. See example below:
EXAMPLE OF COURSEWORK

You will enter all of your courses each semester as it is designated on your transcript.

**ADVISOR TIP:**
1. For your FYOS class you will want to enter “special topics” for the subject drop down menu.
2. When entering your AP credit you want to list it exactly as it appears on your transcript in the semester and year it appears. Instead of listing the letter “K” for the grade, you will want to list “CR” which means Credits Received.

- **You will enter all of your courses each semester as it is designated on your transcript.**
- **DO NOT** rush through this section as you will need to select the courses you have entered for later sections.
- Click [here](#) for more information on adding coursework.
COURSEWORK ENTRY FAQ

- Do I need to include all of my courses on my OptomCAS application?
  - Yes. All previous coursework must be listed (including repeated, failed and withdrawn courses). You must include the course title, department prefix and course number exactly as it appears on your official transcript. OptomCAS must receive an official transcript directly from the Registrar at each institution attended. Applications that do not include all courses listed on their transcripts will be put on hold until the discrepancy is resolved.

- How do I enter the course credits?
  - Use your transcript to determine the Term Type (semester, quarter, or trimester). At times, a credit conversion may be necessary (e.g. 1.00 credit = 4 semester hours). Please be sure to make any credit conversions before you submit your application. **DO NOT** convert quarter to semester hours, the OptomCAS system will do that automatically.

- How do I enter repeated courses?
  - If you repeated a course at the same institution, enter both courses into the coursework section. Enter the grade received for each course but only enter the course credits for the final attempt of the repeated course. The credits for the original course should be 0.00 so it will not be calculated into the GPA. Designate all attempts of the course as “Repeated” during the transcript review process.

- How do I report Advanced Placement (AP) credits?
  - Please enter your AP credits under the first semester attended at the post-secondary institution where the AP credit was awarded. You will enter the test name and subject in the course title and prefix fields and the grade will be CR for credit. Please be sure to add the correct number of credit hours for the AP exam. OptomCAS does not require a copy of the AP test score report.
I have taken courses outside the U.S. as part of a study abroad program. How do I list it in my application?

- Study abroad coursework should be listed under the U.S. institution that sponsored the program. All courses must be designated as “study abroad” during the transcript review process. DO NOT list study abroad coursework under a “Not Listed US/Canadian (foreign) Institution” or under the name of the foreign institution where you took the courses. A foreign evaluation is not needed for study abroad coursework.

Can I update my coursework after I e-submit my application?

- No. Once you have e-submitted your application to OptomCAS, no changes to coursework can be made. If you e-submit your OptomCAS application before your Summer/Fall 2017 grades are available, there will be an Academic Update (AU) period in December-February, which will allow you to update your coursework. Arrange for your updated Summer/Fall transcript to be sent to OptomCAS as soon as they are available. You can only update your coursework once during the Academic Update period. An email will be sent to applicants when the Academic Update period opens.

**ADDITIONAL FAQs FOR COURSEWORK (Completed, In Progress, and Planned)**
COURSEWORK ENTRY STEP-BY-STEP

 Once all courses have been entered, you will click Review and Finalize My Transcripts.

 In Transcript Review, you will be asked to identify additional attributes about your coursework including Primary College and courses that are Repeated, Advanced Placement, Other Tests, Honors, and Study Abroad.

 OptomCAS allows each optometry school to request applicants to identify prerequisite coursework. Once the Colleges Attended and Transcript Entry sections are complete, go to Program Materials to identify prerequisite coursework for each optometry school.
TRANSCRIPT REVIEW: REPEATED COURSES

- Specify if you have repeated any coursework at the same institution. If yes, you will need to indicate which courses were repeated and mark all attempts at this course as repeated. The initial attempts should be marked with a “0” (zero) for the credits. Only the final instance should have the attempted credits reported. Please note, repeats are only considered if taken at the same institution.
TRANSCRIPT REVIEW: AP COURSES

Did you receive credit for any Advanced Placement exams?

- Yes
- No

Continue

Select Your Advanced Placement Credit Courses Below

- I am not adding any Advanced Placement courses.
TRANSCRIPT REVIEW: ADDITIONAL TESTS
TRANSCRIPT REVIEW: HONORS COURSES

- Specify if you have completed honors coursework. If yes, you will need to indicate which courses were honors level courses.
TRANSCRIPT REVIEW: STUDY ABROAD

- Specify if you have completed any coursework under a study abroad program. If yes, indicate which courses were completed as a part of a study abroad program. Study abroad coursework should be listed under the U.S. institution that sponsored the program. All courses must be designated as "study abroad." DO NOT list study abroad coursework under a "Not Listed US/Canadian (foreign) Institution" or under the name of the foreign institution where you took the courses. A foreign evaluation is not needed for study abroad coursework.
This is an optional service and costs $65 for up to 3 transcripts, $90 for 4-6 transcripts and $140 for 7 or more transcripts.

Please note that these fees are for coursework entry only and are in addition to OptomCAS regular application fees.

For further details about this service click here.

There will be a link to the professional service within the application.

I recommend that you double check that everything was entered correctly.
OAT SECTION

- **Standardized Tests – Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) FAQs**

- The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. All schools and colleges of optometry require the OAT. OptomCAS is pleased to announce an electronic integration for OAT scores. Please request your score report be sent to OptomCAS through the OAT testing website: [http://www.ada.org/en/oat](http://www.ada.org/en/oat)

- When you select at least one US optometry school to receive your official OAT scores, you grant the Department of Testing Services permission to release your official scores to all optometry schools to which you have applied through OptomCAS, even if you did not originally select those schools to receive your scores. If your OAT application has no optometry schools selected, then you have not granted permission to the Department of Testing Services to release your official scores and your official scores will not be forwarded to OptomCAS. Only the schools you apply to through OptomCAS will receive your OAT scores once your OptomCAS application is complete.

- If you took the OAT exam prior to June 19, 2017 and want your scores submitted to OptomCAS, you will need to submit a request for an additional score report available at [www.ada.org/en/oat](http://www.ada.org/en/oat). Additional fees will apply.
LETTERS OF EVALUATION

- Contact each letter-writer to confirm they will author an evaluation and to obtain their preferred email address.

- For each letter, include:
  - Name
  - Contact information
  - Due date
  - Personal message/notes.

- The evaluation requires completion of two parts:
  - A rating of attributes
  - A letter

- It is NOT necessary to wait until your evaluators have uploaded a letter to submit your application.

Downloads are critical to application review. To avoid processing delays, please review the directions below to be certain the information you submit is complete and accurate. Before entering evaluator information in this section, it is suggested you contact the individual to confirm they will author your evaluation and to obtain their preferred email address.

The evaluation requires completion of two parts: A rating of attributes (Part I) and a letter (Part II). The letter must be uploaded to the online recommendation portal. Accepted formats for uploads are .pdf, .doc (Microsoft Word), .rtf (Rich Text Format) or .txt (ASCII Text File) files only. Uploaded letters must be less than 5MB in size.

Designate your evaluators early in the application process. We strongly encourage you to enter your evaluator information first to expedite their receipt of the evaluation request. Because OptumCAS evaluation requests may be caught by spam filters, applicants are encouraged to contact their evaluators to ask them to allow their email systems to "permit" the OptumCAS reference mail address: optumcasinfo@optumcas.org.

Suggested sources for evaluation requests include:
- An optometrician who can state through documented experience that you understand the profession of optometry.
- A professor with whom you have done personal work (such as assisting on a specific project or serving as a TA or reader), or with whom you took a course.
- An employer or extracurricular activity advisor who can comment on your maturity, diligence, and conscientiousness.

Do not send evaluations from coworkers, someone you have previously supervised, relatives, or personal and family friends. These are inappropriate and can be detrimental to the review of your application.

Finally, it is not necessary to wait until your evaluators have responded to submit your application.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS AND FAQs
FOUR LETTERS OF EVALUATION

- You must have a minimum of 1 requested evaluation in order to submit your application. You may enter a maximum of 4.

- If the evaluation has been sent, a green STATUS box appears under the Evaluator’s name.

- If the letter of recommendation has yet to be sent a orange STATUS box will appear.

- Make sure to check the evaluation requirements for the different schools because there also may be some slight variations between schools on how many recommendations they want from specific individuals.
LETTERS OF EVALUATION

- When an applicant saves an evaluation request, the evaluator will receive an email request to complete the evaluation.
- The email will include a link to an online portal where the evaluator can upload a letter.
LETTERS OF EVALUATION

- When an applicant saves an evaluation request, the evaluator will receive an email request to complete the evaluation.
- OptomCAS does not provide a prompt or set of characteristics to include in the letter.
  - Evaluators are encouraged to provide information about the applicant’s academic ability, character, time management skills, etc.
- Letters should be on letterhead and include a signature.
What is an Electronic Letter of Evaluation?
- Evaluations are required to be completed electronically by your evaluators. An email request from OptomCAS will be sent to the individual evaluator within instructions.
- There are three status notifications:
  - Requested – The email request has been sent to the Evaluator.
  - Accepted – Evaluator has logged onto the online Portal but has not submitted the evaluation.
  - Completed – Evaluator has completed the evaluation and has submitted it to OptomCAS.

Can I have different evaluations sent to individual programs?
- No. Each evaluation will be sent to all programs for which you are applying.

How can I select a different person as an evaluator than those I initially selected?
- If the status is still “Requested” or “Accepted,” you may delete that individual and add the new source. If the status is “Complete,” changes cannot be made.
LETTERS OF EVALUATION FAQ

- **What does it mean to waive my right to access the evaluation?**
  - You relinquish your access to the provided letter. If you do not waive that right, the evaluator will know that you have access to read it. **ALWAYS** waive your right to access.

- **How can I view my evaluations?**
  - OptomCAS cannot allow you access to your evaluations, nor can applicants view their evaluations during the OptomCAS process. If you have not waived your right to access your evaluations, once you have matriculated to a school or college of optometry, you may be able to then review your letters at that time and at the discretion of the institution.

- **Can I change my waiver to view my recommendation?**
  - No. Once an evaluation has been received by OptomCAS, the waiver cannot be changed.

- **Must I wait for my evaluations to be complete before submitting my application?**
  - It is not necessary, nor is it suggested, to wait until your evaluators have responded to submit your application.

**EVALUATIONS (Letters of Recommendation) FAQs**
EXPERIENCES

- Applicants use the **Experiences** section to provide detailed information about:
  - **Optometric Experience**: All paid and unpaid optometric work experience(s) EXCLUDING shadowing/observation/volunteer experiences should be listed with this experience type.
  - **Employment**: All paid employment (non-optometric). Please list in chronological order from most recent to least recent and include a brief description of your responsibilities.
  - **Shadowing**: All paid and unpaid shadowing/observation experiences should be listed with this experience type.
  - **Extracurricular Activities**: Research, non-optometric club memberships, sports, etc.
  - **Volunteer**: All volunteer experiences should be listed with this experience type. One time experiences should be noted in the job description section.

- Include the name and address of each organization and supervisor, dates associated with the experience, title held by the applicant, average weekly hours, and a description of key responsibilities (600 characters).

- Applicants should only record experiences obtained during college.

- Confusion may arise as to what experience to list under which heading. For example, you completed an internship with an optometrist. Is that shadowing or optometric experience? If there is any confusion about under which heading your experience should be listed, it would be best to cross-list the experience under perhaps at the most two categories that apply.
EXPERIENCES

- Click **ADD AN EXPERIENCE**.

- Use the drop down box to designate type of experience.

- You will also have a description box that allows 600 characters to list your duties regarding your experience.

- Make sure you have your resume completed to while completing this section of the application.
ACHIEVEMENTS

- Provide information about relevant academic awards, honors, and scholarship achieved.

- When adding achievements, detail the name of the presenting organization, issue date and a brief description.

- For honors, awards or scholarships received in multiple years or semesters, either enter them as multiple entries with the same name, or, if the honor or award was received consecutively, as one entry spanning multiple years.
Each program you have designated on your OptomCAS application will appear in the Program Materials section of the application with their own individual program page. This page contains a short introduction to the program, as well as any program-specific questions and/or document uploads that must be completed before submission. Every OptomCAS school or college will have at least 2 required questions: whether or not you have previously applied, and the OptomCAS essay question.

To view a school’s profile in Program Materials, an applicant must first select the school in the “Add Programs” section of the application.

Applicants should carefully review each school’s requirements.
PROGRAM MATERIALS

- There are 4 sections under each school:
  - **Home**: Basic information about the selected optometry school and program details
  - **Prerequisites**: This program requires you to identify courses you have taken that fulfill the prerequisites listed below. Click the 'Go to Transcript Entry' button to enter the appropriate courses, then return to this page to identify which courses fulfill each prerequisite. **Applicants must first complete the Transcript Entry section before courses can be selected as prerequisites.** (This does not mean you have met the school's prerequisite requirements, they are just asking you to self-identify for review).
  - **Questions**: This is usually where you will submit your 4500 character Personal Statement. Some school also allow applicants to submit their supplemental essay questions through the OptomCAS application instead of sending them separately. If this is the case, you will be asked to confirm whether you have paid your supplemental application fee. Usually a link to pay the fee is provided in this section.
  - **Documents**: Supplemental documents may be required and some may be optional. Some examples of supplemental documents could include:
    - Your CV/Resume
    - Course Syllabi for Admissions Committee review (to satisfy prerequisites)
    - Unofficial copy of AP Score Report
    - Other relevant documents
    - **SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATIONS FAQs**
PERSONAL STATEMENT

- 1 page; 4,500 characters including spaces

Describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your preparation for training in this profession, your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest in optometry, and your future career goals.

Traits to express: motivation, academic preparedness, articulate, socially conscious, and knowledgeable about optometry.

Write about your experiences and any qualities that will make you stand out.
Writing Your Personal Statement for Health Professional School

There is no one way to write a personal statement, but there are some best practices and core elements of personal statements. Use some of this information to start writing; consider attending a personal statement workshop or setting up an individual appointment with your Career Consultant to fine-tune your statement.

Structured Your Statement
Organize your Personal Statement just like you would any other essay: introduction, body, conclusion. Each body paragraph should be structured using PEE:

P: Point - topic sentence - what is the point you want to make?
E: Evidence - make your point - what evidence supports your point?
E: Explanation - explain your point - why is this relevant to the program you are pursuing?
L: Link - link your point to the next paragraph.

4 Key Components of Your Statement

1. Motivation
   Why do you want to pursue this career? Think about your initial aspiration and your ongoing preparation.

2. Fit
   How do you know this is the right career for you? Think about the values and personal qualities you possess that make you a good fit for this career. Consider how they match the profession.

3. Capacity
   How do you know that you have what it takes to be successful in this field? Assess your skills, strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. Put them in context of this profession.

4. Vision
   How do you want to impact the profession? Consider broad and specific goals.

Do’s & Don’ts

Do’s:
- Tell a story, find an angle, be specific.
- Write well & proofread!
- Use a clean, professional format.
- Stay within the word/character limit.

Don’ts:
- Speak in clichés or generalities.
- Pretend, whine, condescend, or repeat info from your resume.
- Submit supplemental materials unless they are requested.

Top 10 Tips for Writing Success

1. Plan ahead - time and content. Give yourself more time than you think you need to write your document. Identify the main points you wish to include before you start writing.

2. Narrow your purpose. Be sure you understand the directions you were given, and choose a narrow focus. Each sentence and paragraph should support your purpose and consider your audience.

3. Start in the middle. Introductions and conclusions often prove to be challenging to write. Start in the middle and just begin writing.

4. Embrace terrible first drafts. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Just write, knowing that you may throw out drafts entirely or make significant revisions. Remember that writing is a process.

5. Use strong action verbs. Limit state of being verbs (“is”, “was”, “was”) to only two or three per paragraph. Instead, use strong action verbs to make your writing more interesting.

6. Write in active voice. Using active voice instead of passive voice makes your writing easier to read. For example, rewrite “I used Adobe InDesign to create engaging and creative publications” instead of “Adobe InDesign was used to create engaging and creative publications.”

7. Streamline your words. Avoid clutter, ensuring that each word adds to your purpose. At times, fewer words lead to strong sentences. For instance, “There are many people who are affected by a fear of public speaking” could be improved by writing “Many people fear public speaking.”

8. Use variety of sentence structures and lengths. Using the same sentence structure and length over and over again leads to dull writing. Instead of writing “I went to the grocery store. I bought some delicious chocolate chip cookies.” Try “I went to the grocery store and bought some delicious chocolate chip cookies.”

9. Use transitional words and phrases. Transitions ensure that your sentences and paragraphs flow nicely for the reader. Simply repeating select words from one paragraph to the next serves as a useful transitional tool. Words like "additional," "however," "therefore," and "consequently" can help with transitional flow as well.

10. Start and end strong. Capture your reader’s attention with an interesting opening that introduces your topic and supports your purpose of writing. A strong conclusion sums up your purpose and leaves the reader with a positive impression.

Reflective Writing Prompts

Use these prompts to practice writing personal content with details and structure.

1. If I could talk to my childhood self, the one thing I would say is...
2. What surprised you most about your life or life in general?
3. Write about a moment in your life that you wish you could freeze and preserve.
4. Imagine being the day as someone else.
5. Write about a promise you want to make to yourself and keep.
6. I feel most energized when...

Adapted from the University of Minnesota “Personal Statements for a Health Program,” 2017
**DEADLINES**

- **Who determines deadlines?**
  - Deadlines are determined by the individual programs, NOT BY OptomCAS. **It is the applicant’s responsibility to research each program’s deadline requirements before submitting their application.**

- **Am I able to request a deadline extension?**
  - The OptomCAS application will not allow you to apply to a program once its application deadline has passed. If the deadline has passed and you are not able to apply, you should contact the school directly to request a deadline extension. If your request is approved, the designated school will notify OptomCAS to allow you to submit your application after the deadline.

- **What will happen if my transcripts arrive after the program deadline date? Will OptomCAS process my application?**
  - OptomCAS will continue to process your application even if the transcripts are received after the deadline. However, you will need to check with individual schools to see if they require all materials by the deadline date or will accept some materials after the deadline date.

- **Will schools have the same deadline?**
  - No, each school has its own deadlines. You can find these deadlines in the My Programs section of OptomCAS.
SUBMIT APPLICATION

- Once all of the sections are complete, an applicant can pay and submit their application. The green status bar indicates the completion status to a designated institution. Once complete, the blue “Pay and Submit this Program” button will appear. You must use this button to submit your application to a particular program prior to their specific application deadline. You can add any or all programs you are ready to submit and pay for, then click the blue “Pay For My Programs” button at the top of the page. Payment must go through by 11:59pm Eastern Time on the program’s deadline date in order to be considered for admission.

- OptomCAS will not be able to verify your application until your application is in COMPLETE status. To be in COMPLETE status, you must have submitted your application, paid your application fees and OptomCAS must have received all required official transcripts.

- Once an application is complete (submitted and all transcripts are received), it begins the verification process (i.e., standardized GPAs are calculated and transcripts are reviewed for errors).

- All applicants are encouraged to submit the application well in advance of posted deadline dates as optometry schools admit students on a rolling basis.

- So you know how many elements are completed and to gauge your progress, OptomCAS provides an icon entitled “Sections Completed” for each category. While this is helpful, you are advised to communicate with your designated programs after submitting your application to verify that your application is in fact considered complete by their program.
MANAGE YOUR APPLICATION

- Once the application is Submitted and Paid, the application is locked and most sections cannot be updated for the remainder of the application cycle.

- The only sections that can be updated are:
  - Contact Information
  - Profile Information (username, password, security question, etc.)
  - Add programs (to apply to whose deadlines have not yet passed).
  - Edit or delete a reference whose status remains INCOMPLETE
  - ADD NEW but CANNOT EDIT or DELETE test scores, experiences, achievements and certifications.
  - ADD new coursework. (This information will not be included in your GPA unless submitted as part of the Academic Update.) Click here for more information on ACADEMIC UPDATE.
  - Program Materials for schools you have NOT yet submitted to. Programs you have already submitted to will be locked.
  - If you have updates that need to be made to other sections of your application, you must submit these updates directly to your programs.
ACADEMIC UPDATE

What is Academic Update?
- Academic Update is intended to allow you to change your previously planned/in-progress courses to completed and self-report your grades for this work. You may also add future planned courses. The system will NOT allow you to go back and edit previously verified terms or add in terms you forgot to report from past years (i.e. you never updated your fall 2017 work before you were verified).

When does the Academic Update window open?
- The 2018-2019 cycle Academic Update is projected to open on December 15, 2018 and end February 1, 2019 and is subject to change. You can update your work from the day you are verified until the end of the application cycle, however, OptomCAS will only update your GPA during this Academic Update window if properly submitted by the Academic Update deadline.

- You can also make updates to your in progress coursework multiple times during the course of the cycle. However, please note that when submitting an update, you must move the entire TERM from in-progress to complete. You cannot move only some of the courses within a term to completed and add the rest later. This information will NOT be verified by OptomCAS or included in your GPA.

How to use Academic Update.
- Once your application status is “verified,” navigate to the “Transcript Entry” section. Edit any Planned/In Progress terms that are now completed, by unchecking the Planned/In Progress box on the term. Then, edit each of your courses and add in the grades and credits.

- Please note you must have completed ALL of the courses in the term before switching the term’s status to complete. At this time, you may also enter any new planned or in-progress terms. Once you are finished adding all of your new courses, you must submit your Academic Update for verification.

- In order to submit your Academic Update for verification, applicants will need to Review and Finalize again. At the end of the Review and Finalize process they will see the ‘Submit My Updates’ button. To submit updates back to verification you should click the ‘Submit My Updates’ button. Please note applicants are only able to submit their Academic Update ONCE during the AU period.

- Once you have clicked the ‘Submit My Updates’ button, navigate to your main application dashboard. On the top of your page you should see an “Update my Application” button. Click on this button to send any application updates to your Programs.
ACADEMIC UPDATE

- **Who can take advantage of Academic Update?**
  - You can begin the Academic Update only after OptomCAS has verified your completed application. The following steps must be completed before you can begin the Academic Update process.
    - You must e-submit your original application.
    - You must pay the OptomCAS fees in full.
    - OptomCAS has verified your initial application for your designated optometry schools. Verified applicants will be contacted by OptomCAS once the Academic Update period begins.

- **Can I use Academic Update more than once?**
  - No. You can only submit your Academic Update coursework once. Make sure you have the complete results for your fall classes and carefully review before submitting your academic update. If you do not click the “Update” button through the “Review and Finalize Transcripts”, your GPA will not be updated.

  - [FOR MORE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ACADEMIC UPDATE CLICK HERE.](#)
GOOD LUCK!