The background features a vertical gradient from light yellow at the top to dark orange at the bottom. Scattered throughout are numerous white circles of varying sizes, some overlapping, creating a bokeh-like effect.

Writing a Personal Statement that Sells

What is a Personal Statement?

- **A 1-2 page, single-spaced narrative in first person telling why you want to go into a profession and how you've prepared. (Check with centralized application programs and schools on character/word limits.)**
- Shows your personality.
- Describes your values and goals.
- Highlights your strengths and sometimes acknowledges your short-comings.
- Explains your fit and readiness for and understanding of the profession.
- Sets you apart from other applicants.
- Tells your story.
- Not a resume or a cover letter.

Look at this, not look at me.

CAS Character Limits

- AACOMAS (Osteopathic Medicine)
- AACPMAS (Podiatry)
- AADSAS (Dentistry)
- AMCAS (Allopathic Medicine)
- ATCAS (Athletic Training)
- CASPA (Physician Assistant)
- CSDCAS (SLP & Audiology)
- HAMPCAS (Health Care Administration)
- NursingCAS (Nursing)
- OptomCAS (Optometry)
- OTCAS (Occupational Therapy)
- PharmCAS (Pharmacy)
- PTCAS (Physical Therapy)
- SOPHAS (Public Health)
- TMDSAS (Texas Med/Dent/Vet)
- VMCAS (Veterinary Medicine)

Character limits (including spaces) often range from 4500 to 5500. Some have document size limits instead of characters.

Not all academic programs use the centralized application services. Students must verify this for each school.

Questions to Consider Addressing Within the Personal Statement

- How did you realize this field was for you?
- What/Who influenced you?
- What have you observed or learned from your clinical experience?
- What are your goals and values?
- Describe a meaningful life experience that influenced your interest in the field or your professional goals.
- What challenges have you overcome along your vocational journey?
- What positively separates you from other applicants?

Think about what you want the audience to know after reading your statement.

General Tips to Writing a Personal Statement

- Start writing early. You will likely compose several drafts before your PS is complete.
- Read the prompt from the CAS or check the program website.
- Think about what is unique or special about you and figure out a way to weave that into your statement.
- Be specific in explaining why a career is a good fit for you. Knowing your field well may require understanding other health professions too!
 - Go beyond the inspirational moments.

General Tips to Writing a Personal Statement

- Have it reviewed for content, grammar, structure, and to see if your key points came across to the reader.
 - Use precise language.
- Don't use too much technical jargon.
 - Your audience will vary (admissions staff, clinicians, faculty, etc.) and their understanding may be less/greater than yours.
- Technical Points
 - Professional vs graduate school
 - Know the name of your degree or program
 - When do you capitalize it?
 - When do you use apostrophes or hyphens?
 - Sometimes the CAS have it wrong—PTCAS.

Items to Avoid in Your Personal Statement

- Arrogance
 - "After this experience, I know what it is like to be a _____."
 - "I am perfect for your program!"
- Telling what this type of professional does or is
 - "A _____ is someone who is intelligent and compassionate."
- Grandiose statements.
 - "I will give all of myself to every patient/client I meet."
- Inappropriate
 - "A job in this field could make me a lot of money."
- Offending Others
 - "I decided to become a _____ instead of settling for being a _____."

Explaining “Why this profession?”

- Think about what the duties and responsibilities are for this profession. Read job descriptions or go to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) for ideas.
- Remember what you observed while at a site to volunteer, shadow, or intern. Be careful not to assume what you saw in one setting or with one professional applies to all.
- Go beyond the inspirational moments. You can include them but don't limit your passion for the field to these moments.

Which response is stronger?

- I have wanted to work in this field since I was young when I witnessed the impact doctors had on my brother who was severely injured in a car accident. The surgeons saved his life, and I want to give back to others the way they helped him and our family. I can't imagine doing anything else as a profession.
- Through shadowing and my courses in the natural sciences, I realized one way to share my talents and compassion for others was to become a physician assistant. Human physiology is fascinating to me, and by observing a PA, I learned a little bit about how they put that knowledge to work by diagnosing and treating patients. Since science is ever-changing, there will always be new opportunities for professional development; which is exciting. In addition, the collaboration between PAs and doctors is an ideal relationship to me, and I see myself thriving in an environment where communication and teamwork between professionals can lead to the benefit of the patient. I really want to have a lot of patient contact and feel this role allows for a high level of interaction with patients as well.

Which reflection stands out?

- I have learned to draw blood, run fecals, use catheters, and calm emotional patients/clients.
- My experiences with *(fill in name of professional here)* have convinced me I will be a wonderful veterinarian.
- Through my clinical experiences, I saw the importance of collaboration between practitioners in health care. One patient worked with a physician, nurses, physical and occupational therapists, and a speech pathologist. Clear and accurate communication was crucial to effectively serve the patient and avoid serious errors.

How might the writer take the stronger reflection to the next level?

Which conclusion is best?

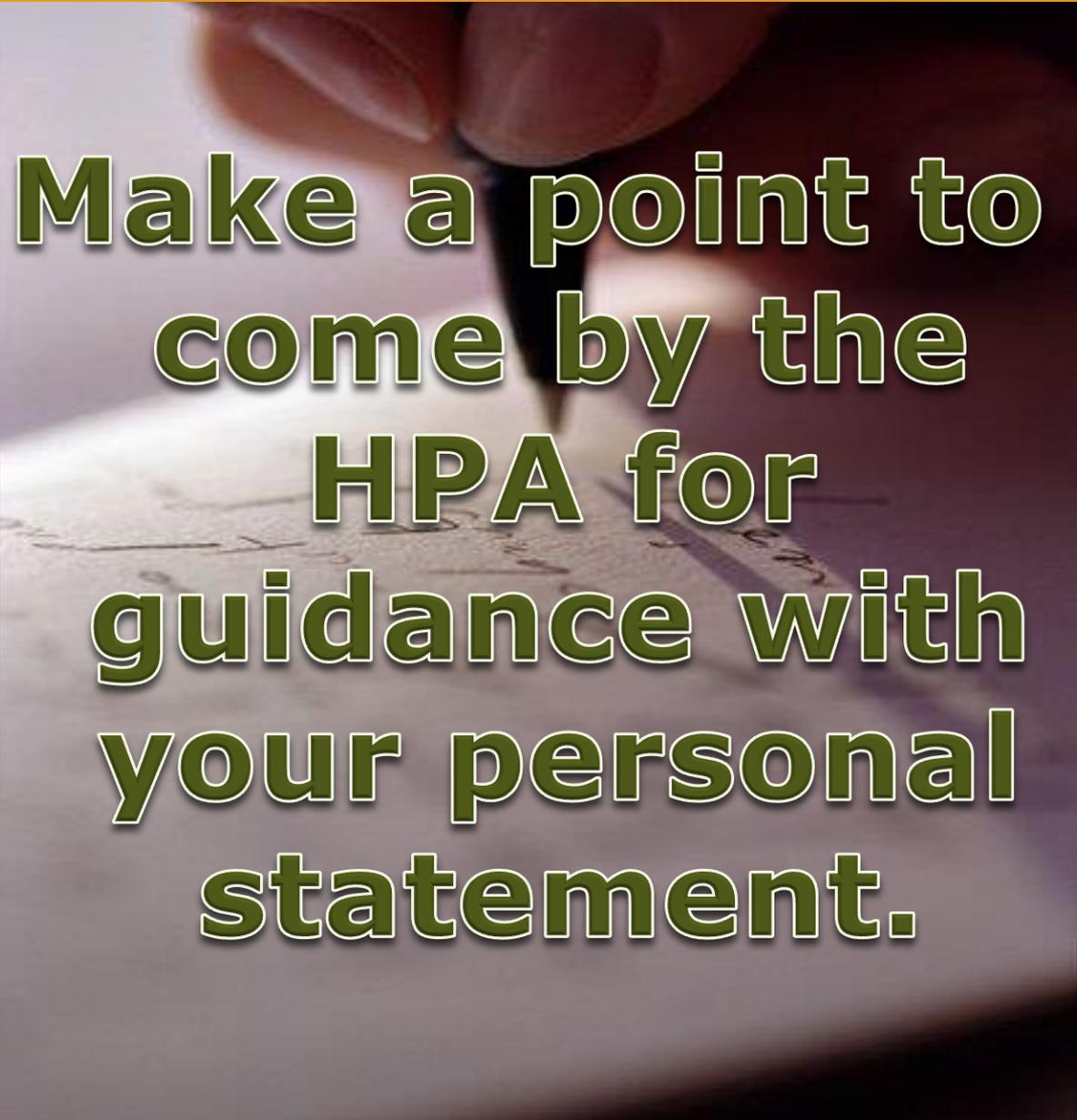
- I see being a dentist providing me with an opportunity to serve society through my work with people, research, and the community.
- With all of my experiences and academic achievements, I know physical therapy and your program are a perfect fit for me.
- By shadowing an optometrist, I've learned what it is like to work in the field and know I have everything it takes to be successful.

Something to Help You Start Writing

- Without thinking too much, write about one or more of the following topics:
 - Most exciting experience you have ever had.
 - Pivotal moment in deciding on this career.
 - An experience where you were seriously challenged in some fashion from pursuing this career but pushed on anyway.
 - How are you special as an applicant?
- Set a timer for 10 minutes so you are forced to move quickly and put the words down.
- At this time, focus more on putting something on paper versus exact wording, spelling, grammar, etc. Your goal is to just have something to work from.

Just Remember...

- It can be hard to market yourself to others. Remember these ideas to help you with this:
 - Sell yourself without diminishing others or appearing overly confident.
 - Use professional writing and don't hypercorrect.
 - Be honest about your experiences and don't exaggerate. Simple, honest, and concise writing is often the best writing. Avoid TMI.
 - Think about the suggested questions to keep you focused.
 - Keep thinking about what excites you most about your profession so your enthusiasm comes out in your writing.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black pen, writing on a document. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow with faint circular patterns. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, green, sans-serif font with a white outline and a drop shadow.

**Make a point to
come by the
HPA for
guidance with
your personal
statement.**