

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT



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WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

Your personal statement is the most important part of your application to university. It explains who you are, why you think you are a good applicant and why you want to study the course you have chosen. It is about 4000 characters/47 lines and needs to be submitted along with the rest of your UCAS application.

WHY DOES A PERSONAL STATEMENT MATTER?

It allows you to stand out from other applicants with the same grades. Competition for university is tough; your grades alone will not get you a place. Think of it like a job application – you need to impress.

DO...

- **Structure!** Even if you make good points, a poorly organised personal statement makes reading hard work.
- **Do lots of drafts!** You should start your personal statement in a word doc and redraft it until you're completely happy, then upload the final version to your UCAS application.
- **Show awareness of your subject.** Make sure your passion shines through.
- **Make it relevant and current.**
- **Give examples to back up your points:** don't just say "I am adaptable and have excellent time management skills" without any evidence. How does your reader know this is true? Instead, try something like this: "I've developed excellent time management skills through juggling my studies with a part-time job and babysitting my sisters twice a week. Balancing these responsibilities while still leaving time for hobbies is challenging, but I make weekly plans which enable me to organise myself well."
- **Use all the space** – just writing a few lines isn't enough.
- **Check your deadlines.** Find out from your school or college when you have to apply by. Plan ahead so you can take your time writing a winning personal statement!

DON'T...

- **Lie.** You will be caught out.
- **Use slang or poor English.** This is a formal document.
- **Use bullet points.** Write in full paragraphs.
- **Get someone else to write it** – that includes personal statements found online. Admissions tutors have software which will tell them if something is stolen.
- **Try to include too much.** It is better to mention a few skills with examples to show how you developed them.
- **Repeat information** that is elsewhere on your application.
- **Mention specific universities.** The same personal statement goes to all your choices.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

ACADEMIC (YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE)

- Why do you want to study this course?
- How has your experience at school or college prepared you for university?
- Are you involved in any sports, clubs or societies?

NON-ACADEMIC (YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL OR COLLEGE)

- What work experience or voluntary work have you done?
- Are there any other activities you're interested in outside of school or college?

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Having a structure can help you write your statement – we call this the rule of thirds.

You'll need to write about your school/college experience, work/voluntary experience, your interests and what makes you motivated to study at university.

Over the next six pages you will find a suggested structure, including prompt questions and ideas on how to get started.

You don't have to answer every question in the paragraph, they are just there to help, but it's useful to try to write something for each section.



USEFUL PHRASES

"My decision to study... (subject) at university has been particularly inspired by... (event) and will allow me to achieve my future goal of... (ambition)."

"Studying... (subject) will allow me to develop...(skills) as well as giving me the opportunity to...(experience). I am particularly excited at the prospect of finding out more about... (subject) which I have been interested in since... (when)."

YOUR REASONS FOR YOUR CHOICE OF COURSE

Have a go at answering these five questions on the following page:

- 1 Which course would you like to study?
- 2 Why are you interested in studying this course?
- 3 Why do you find this field interesting?
- 4 Is there anything in particular that has inspired you?
- 5 What are your future aims and ambitions — do you have a particular career in mind?

DO... give specific reasons for your choice.

DON'T... just say "I want to study this subject because I'm passionate about it and it's interesting"; this doesn't say anything about you.

ALWAYS... avoid mentioning specific universities.

Practice your answers here



USEFUL PHRASES

"Being involved in a busy/professional/successful... (state type of company e.g. accountancy firm) allowed me to... (briefly describe the main tasks that relate to the skills you gained). These duties developed my skills in... (discuss your skills)."

"As well as providing practical experience in a ... (state area of work eg computer retail store) the job also allowed me to develop skills in ... (state skills) through... (state tasks). I am particularly proud of my ability to..."

YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE OR VOLUNTARY WORK

Have a go at answering these six questions on the following page:

- 1 What skills have you gained from part time/work experience?
- 2 What tasks did your job role involve and what did you learn?
- 3 How do you feel your work experience can benefit you?
- 4 Have you been involved in any voluntary work or projects in your local community?
- 5 Have you held any positions of responsibility?

- 6 Have you been involved in any virtual work experience or training?

DO... talk about the skills you gained from your work experience. Skills could include: time management, team work, leadership, problem solving, communication, diplomacy, numeracy, analytical skills, presentation, confidence, increased responsibility and awareness.

DON'T... underestimate the skills you gain from work and undersell yourself.

ALWAYS... mention any work experience you have in the subject area you're applying for.

Practice your answers here



USEFUL PHRASES

"While at college I have particularly enjoyed... (state subject) because it has allowed me to... (state reason). I was especially proud of my work during the module on... (state module), during which I had to... (state what you did)."

"My school experience will really help me at university because it has given me the ability to... (state skill/ability) which will help me to prepare for my (state activity/course at university)."

YOUR SCHOOL/COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Have a go at answering these five questions on the following page:

- 1 How do you feel your studies will help you progress onto higher education?
- 2 Is there a particular project you enjoyed, excelled at or really inspired you?
- 3 What skills do you feel you have developed during the course of your studies?
- 4 Have you balanced your academic life with aspects of your social life?
- 5 Have you gained any skills when studying independently/virtually?

DO... focus on the subjects you've most enjoyed/have more to say about.

DON'T... list the courses/subjects you're taking — this is stated elsewhere on your application.

ALWAYS... be positive. Saying negative things about education doesn't look good on an application to university.

Practice your answers here



USEFUL PHRASES

"Taking responsibility for ... (state responsibility) has developed my skills in ... (state skills)."

"Attending matches as part of my college's football team has not only enabled me to.... (state what you've done) but also....(state what else you've done) which I really value because I have gained the ability to.... (state ability)"

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN SPORTS, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Have a go at answering these six questions on the following page:

- 1 Are you involved in any sports teams?
- 2 Any clubs or societies?
- 3 Have you recently participated in any events?
- 4 What form of responsibility do you hold within the team/club/society?
- 5 Have you been rewarded with any medals/certificates/awards?
- 6 What types of skills do you feel you have gained?

DO... make sure anything you mention here is current.

DON'T... lie about being part of a club or society if you're not. You can talk about how you're interested in exploring new clubs and societies at university or you can focus on other positive experiences you've had instead.

ALWAYS... mention the skills you've gained – for instance being on a team will probably involve some kind of team work.

Practice your answers here



USEFUL PHRASES

"In my spare time, I have strived to learn more about (state....) e.g. astronomy despite little information being available at school/college. The reason for my interest in this area is... (give your reason)."

"An experience which I feel has had a real positive impact on me was when I... (state experience). This really inspired me and opened my eyes to... (state what you learned...)."

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS OUTSIDE SCHOOL/COLLEGE

Have a go at answering these three questions on the following page:

- 1 What are your hobbies and interests?
- 2 How would you describe yourself as a person? What are your strengths?
- 3 Do you have a valuable or exciting experience you would like admissions staff to know about? For example have you been travelling? Have you learnt about different cultures and backgrounds?

DO... be honest! A university will be able to spot any lies.

DON'T... be unspecific about your interests. Don't just say "I like music and having a laugh with my friends". This won't impress, And doesn't make you sound interesting or like you'd be a particularly good applicant.

ALWAYS... include at least a few lines on hobbies — universities do want to know about you as a well-rounded individual.

Practice your answers here



WELL DONE!

You've done the hard work, now it's time to wrap it up and write your conclusion.

USEFUL PHRASES

"I hope to continue to ... (state hobby or interest) at university because it provides me with an opportunity to ... (state opportunity e.g. meet people)."

A CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Have a go at answering these last four questions on the final page:

- 1 What aspect of university are you looking forward to?
- 2 Are there any clubs/societies you really want to join? Why?
- 3 What career path would you like to go into and why?
- 4 What can you offer to the university?

DO... keep it short, clear and to the point.

DON'T... say you're going to take a gap year without having a plan. It doesn't sound impressive if you haven't worked out what you want to do. If you don't have a plan, make one!

ALWAYS... include a conclusion. You need to round your personal statement off neatly.

Practice your answers here

ASK OUR EXPERTS



WANT PERSONALISED FEEDBACK ON YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT? SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND OUT MORE.



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