

UCAS

A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT



UCAS Personal Statements Getting Started

What is it?

A chance for you to ‘sell’ your suitability and enthusiasm for the courses to the admissions tutor/staff.

Who reads it?

The admissions tutor/staff for the courses you have applied for.

How long should it be?

47 lines of text

4000 Characters

This is the maximum do not go over this amount!

Do your research before starting

What courses are available?

Do I meet the academic requirements?

Are there any other requirements for the course, such as work experience, or a portfolio?

Universities don’t see where else you are applying to and you only write one personal statement for all five choices, so ensure it is relevant for all of the courses you are applying to.

Useful Websites

www.studential.com/personalstatements

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

www.mmu.ac.uk/study/apply/personalstatement

www.studento.com

www.which.co.uk/university

UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement is your chance to impress: it's a letter, job application, CV and interview all in one

What must your statement show?

- Motivation
- Enthusiasm for the course
- Academic enthusiasm
- More than purely academic-kind of person you are
- Your personality, interests, achievements and relevant work experience
- That you're a well rounded individual. Paint a fuller picture of yourself

Memory Jogger

List everything positive that makes you who you are—a list to remind you of all your qualities. Remember, they're interested in you!



The five-section structure



Section 1 : Why?

Why are you applying for the course?

- Enjoyment
- Studying in depth
- Skills
- Inspiration
- Wider reading
- Research

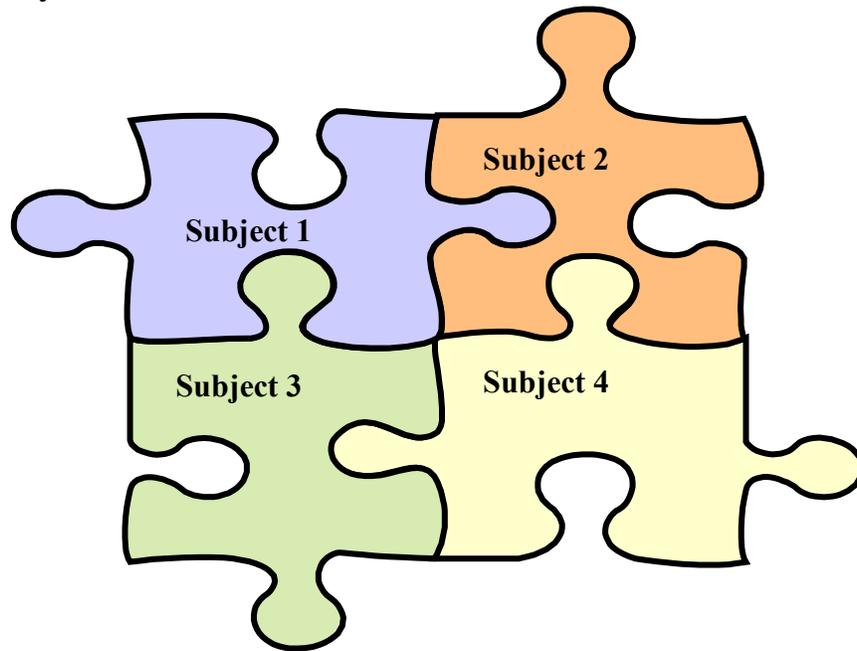
Make Your 1st sentence stand out

Be enthusiastic

**Avoid clichés
'Ever since I was a child'**

Section 2 : Academic

In your second section relate your chosen course to your post 16 subject or subjects. State the aspects of any other subjects you are studying that are relevant to your chosen course.



Section 3 : Work Exp.

In this section you need to show what you've done to demonstrate your enthusiasm for your subject.

What relevant experience have you had?

Show your subject means something beyond the classroom. Show that your knowledge of the subject has convinced you you'll enjoy it at degree level and be successful

Be enthusiastic
Show that you have a love of your subject
Make genuine claims: remember you may be called for interview and asked about them

Relevant work experience. Talk about the skills gained: communication, listening, diplomacy, persuasion, independence time management, initiative, problem solving, team work

Golden Rule Be Specific

Section 4 : Interests & Activities

In the fourth section relate your activities and experiences both inside and outside of school to your suitability for university.

Admissions Tutors need to know that you're capable of living and working independently, so this section must emphasise your maturity

Describe your activity, then describe the skills that you've learnt

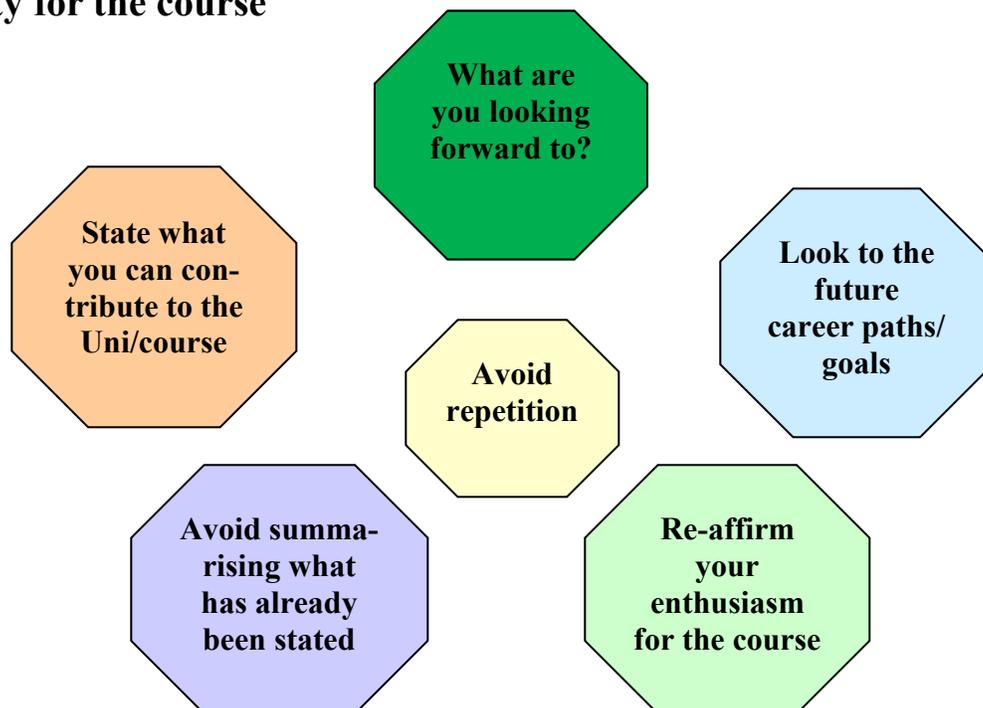
How relevant are these skills to your chosen subject

Qualities and Skills: Useful Terms

Approachable Communication Communicator Confident Diplomatic	Dependable Efficient Empathetic Helpful Independent	Initiative Listening Management Organised Problem solving	Public speaking Punctual Responsible Self-expression Self-motivated	Sensitive Teamwork Time Management Trustworthy Working to deadlines
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Section 5 : Conclusion

The main aim of the conclusion is to briefly summarise what you hope to gain from and contribute to, university life and your suitability for the course



Personal statement Template

The main aim is to convey your enthusiasm and commitment regarding your chosen subject.

Paragraph One – Course Choice

Why that degree? Why have you decided to apply for this particular degree programme? Link your subject choice with examples of personal experiences that triggered or reinforced your interest but don't fall into the familiar trap of beginning with 'ever since I was a child'

What interests you about it? Be specific and personal about your particular attraction to the subject(s). Give examples of topics, issues, personal research, reading outside the course specification, practical work, projects, coursework etc.

Career plans. What career/skills/plans have you when you have the degree of your choice?

Paragraph Two – Academic Skills

What have you enjoyed in Post 16 study? Include skills you have gained and personal progression and development. What interests you about your current courses and how can this be applied to the degree – don't forget to include wider reading or experience beyond the syllabus.

Wider academic experiences. What activities and events have you attended and been involved with – subject lectures, trips, mentoring etc.

Paragraph Three – Work Experience

Show any responsibilities you were given and transferable skills gained from the work experience you have undertaken. Did you learn anything about your chosen subject/career choice from the experience?

Paragraph Four – Extra-Curricular what else have you done?

Include areas of your life that demonstrate skills and development. Include subjects studied outside the curriculum, positions of responsibility, and other achievements e.g. mentoring, coaching, charity work etc., any gap year plans, include activities and interests that demonstrate leadership, teamwork, ability to work independently and manage time effectively

Paragraph Five Concluding statement

One sentence that sums up your commitment to the subject—be positive, forward thinking and ambitious.

Follow these University tips when writing your personal statement.

Be clear: why are you choosing this course?

Show motivation and enthusiasm for the subject.

Show knowledge of and interest in the subject

Demonstrate that you are mature and responsible.

Show you can use your initiative.

Demonstrate analytical and communication skills.

Structure the material: the majority (50-75%) of your personal statement should be spent explaining why you want to do the course.

Be truthful, the information given could be the basis for an interview.

Don't try to be funny.

Be original, UCAS has plagiarism detection.

Mention career plans if you have them.

Seek help and guidance from staff and ask others to read through it for you.

Finally do as many drafts as you need to get it right and check your spelling and grammar.





Having followed the 5 part structure you should now have five sections that are specifically relevant to your

CONSTRUCT BRIDGES

Try to get a fluency and sense of direction in your statement. Create bridges between the sections.

Use the following phrases to help you do this.

“As well as...” “Besides...”
 “Having...” “In addition to ...”
 “Not only... but also...” “...more recently...”
 “...not to mention...” “...enabled me...”
 “...opportunity to ...” “...provided me...”
 “...reinforced...” “...strengthened...”

AVOID PASSIVE WRITING

Rewrite sentences that use ‘has been’ or ‘was’.

Try and avoid beginning every sentence with ‘I’. Here are some ways to avoid ‘I...’

I enjoy rock climbing → “Rock climbing is important to me because I...”

I organised event → “Organising events allowed me to...”

I enjoy sport → “Having enjoyed playing basketball, I...”

I gained a number of skills → “The skills I gained from...”

I love the challenge → “The challenge of... appeals to me”

I play tennis and squash → “As well as tennis I also...”

PUNCTUATION

Correct use of punctuation creates a good impression.

Make sure you use a variety of punctuation.

Colon: use a colon to reinforce a point you’ve made

Semi -colon: use to join two sentences that share a theme

Dash: use a dash to include an afterthought or to add extra impact

Exclamation mark: use sparingly to maximise their impact.

USING PUNCTUATION MAKES FOR AN EFFECTIVE STATEMENT. HOWEVER, IF YOU’RE UNSURE HOW THEY SHOULD BE USED – DON’T USE THEM!

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Vary sentence length. Use a range of sentence length to make things more interesting for the reader.

Short, emphatic sentences at the end of paragraphs can be particularly effective.

SPELLING

YOU MUST CHECK YOUR STATEMENT FOR SPELLING MISTAKES.

If you’re using a spell check, make sure you avoid American spelling!

REMEMBER: BE SPECIFIC, BE ENTHUSIASTIC, DEMONSTRATE MATURITY, AVOID CLICHÉS, ALWAYS KEEP YOUR CHOSEN COURSE IN MIND, STICK TO WHAT YOU KNOW, INCLUDE YOUR OWN IDEAS.

How Not to Write your UCAS Personal Statement

Writing your personal statement might well be a new and stressful experience, but it's your big chance to impress someone who doesn't know you. There's lots of advice on what to include in your personal statement

Repeating yourself

Don't provide information available elsewhere on the form. What's the point in wasting valuable space on a list of your GCSE's, which school/college you're at and even your name? Credit the Admissions Tutor with the ability to retain this information which he or she has read in another part of your form.

Mind your language

If you really want to get no offers at all, one of the best ways to achieve this is to write in really, really bad English. Instead, to make yourself popular with admissions tutors, make sure you use language and grammar properly, punctuate correctly and avoid using unnecessary capital letters.

Over-writing

This technique is often used by students trying to disguise the fact that they've got absolutely nothing interesting to write about themselves. They hope that lots of flowery language will make up for them having no proper reason for choosing their courses and no outside interests at all. So, if you actually want to get offers write concisely and use plain English and words you understand.

Quotations

If you are going to include a quote from a book/poem/play then write about it intelligently, putting it in some logical context, and be prepared to discuss it at interview.

Get to the point

Some applicants devote vast swathes of their personal statement to their hobby, often writing about it for several paragraphs before they even mention the subject they've applied for. Top of the list should be your reasons for choosing your subject, closely followed by some indication that you enjoy studying, your skills and so on. Outside interests are an important factor, but not to the exclusion of everything else.

The negative approach

This is the person for whom everything has gone wrong, and they're going for the sympathy vote. This usually involves a rambling explanation of why they did so badly in their GCSE's/AS exams (or both).

First rule of personal statements: they should be positive! Turn anything negative to your advantage-you overcame an obstacle to do better than expected, or by pursuing your main hobby/sport, means that you have to plan your time extra-effectively, and so on.

Txt spk

Adms ttrs r old fshnd - for some reason they prefer proper English and some indication that you are taking the process seriously.

Jokes

Don't.

Party animal?

Socialising is not a proper hobby and could be interpreted as a complete aversion to hard work. Instead, tell universities what you actually like doing socially, whether it's playing football, seeing live bands or going to the cinema.

Cutting it Short

Very short personal statements indicate a lack of effort and nothing interesting to say about yourself, so it's a good idea to keep to the required length.

Copycat

Be warned UCAS has plagiarism detection software and will pick up chunks of 'borrowed' personal statements. Don't do it!

Let me in, or else!

At all costs avoid sounding threatening - some students are tempted by the "you should accept me onto your course otherwise you will be making a big mistake" approach.

HOW NOT TO WRITE A UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT

My name is Fred and I am in Year 12 at Altrincham College of Arts. I live with my parents in Timperley and have two older brothers. I have lived in Altrincham all of my life I want to be a teacher because I have always liked children. I want to work in a primary school with younger children

All this information is unnecessary your name and school are already on the application

I am taking A Levels in English, Geography and History. My predicted grades are B in English and Geography and C in History. I achieved seven grade C's and above for my GCSE's

Why do you like children? Why younger children in particular? Have you any experience with children even babysitting your own brothers or sisters?

Again, this is already on your application. Predicted grades are given by the school. It would be better to give reasons why you chose these subjects and what you like about them

As part of my GCSE's I went to one of the World War One battle sites and really enjoyed this. I am a member of the archery club in school and play in the football team

So what did you enjoy learning about World War One? What kind of skills have you developed by playing sports?

I am a good team worker, am able to analyse and discuss, and have excellent organisational skills.

You need to give examples of how you demonstrate these abilities. e.g. playing sports may show teamwork skills.

I went to the Co-op for my work experience and was offered a part-time job there that I have been doing ever since.

What have you learned or developed doing a part-time job? It might be customer service skills or being punctual and reliable.

During my time in school I have been a form representative on the school council and in Year 11 was a prefect.

Again, what did you learn? What did you do?

I am interested in a BEd course and would like to take either English or Science as my main subject

Explain what interests you. Why such unrelated subjects? If you really are interested in both English and Science then you need to give good reasons.

I have decided to apply for deferred entry as I would like to take a year out of education.

This is too vague. Are you planning on travelling around Europe, for example, or have you been offered temporary work?

My eventual career aim is to do something really different with young children and make a lasting impression in a senior position

This says nothing. It is a good idea to mention a career aim but make it realistic, and show you have an understanding of where the degree might lead you to.

I think I would gain a lot from my university experience and look forward to both the academic and social challenge

An unnecessary sentence unless you can justify what you write. Remember spelling and grammar really do matter!