

Writing a Personal Statement

What is a personal statement?

A personal statement is what you write in support of your application to college or university. It allows you the freedom to express yourself – why you want to study your chosen course, highlighting your skills and experience. It is the way to convince the college or university that they should offer you a place.

What should it include?

- Look at the **personal qualities, skills and experience** your course requires and make sure you refer to these in your personal statement
- Why have you chosen the course or subject? Show your **enthusiasm and motivation** to undertake the course
- What interests you about the course or subject?
- What relevant **knowledge** do you have?
- Why are you suitable for the course?
- What are your **future career ambitions** – especially if it relates to the course or subject?
- About you:
 - Your work experience – even if part time
 - Any voluntary work
 - Positions of responsibility in school e.g. member of a committee or club, buddy, student leader, etc.
 - Hobbies and interests – especially if relevant to the course – but which show you lead a balanced life
 - **Achievements** – whether at school or through a hobby e.g. winning dance competitions, school representative at competitions, Duke of Edinburgh award, etc.
- Honesty – don't exaggerate
- Use examples – e.g. how being in the Duke of Edinburgh improved your team building and leadership skills
- A conclusion – short and to the point.



Key skills

It is important to highlight your key skills especially if they are **directly relevant** to your chosen course e.g. if applying for childcare, then being organised and approachable are key skills to have.

But, don't just say "I have good organisational skills" – use an example "I used my organisational skills to arrange a fund raising cake sale for MacMillan Cancer Support".

Key skills to include:

- **Organisational** skills – good at being organised for class, work, studying, clubs, events, committees, etc.
- **Communication** skills – good at writing, listening, and speaking
- **Team building** skills – including others and working together to achieve a common goal
- **Leadership** skills – taking responsibility to lead the team/group in decision making and achieving a goal
- **Problem solving** skills – ability to be creative in finding solutions



- **Research** skills – good at finding, analysing and evaluating information
- **Numeracy** skills – you can work effectively and accurately with numbers, calculations, charts and statistics
- **IT** skills – ability to use different computer packages, databases, etc. Also aware of issues such as data security and privacy

You don't need to mention all of these skills – pick the ones most relevant to your chosen course or subject. Remember to use examples.

UCAS Applications

For UCAS applications, you will use one statement for multiple course applications, so bear in mind:



- You only have 47 lines and 4000 characters (including spaces) to say what you want to, so be concise
- Avoid being very specific about one course:
 - If your courses are similar, then talk about the subject
 - If your courses are very different, write about common themes instead e.g. problem solving, communication skills
 - Don't use the university name as one application is used for several institutions.

Finally

- Keep it to the **point** – don't use flowery language or unnecessary words like really, very, particularly etc. – you will have a limited amount of characters to say what you need to say
- **Don't use clichés** e.g. I was born to study drama; I have always dreamed of being an accountant; I have been interested in this subject since I was young
- **Avoid flattery** – universities and colleges are interested in YOU not hearing how good you think they are
- Check for **spelling** mistakes
- Check for **grammatical** errors
- Use **paragraphs** as this makes it easier to read
- Make sure it **makes sense** – read aloud; if it sounds wrong, change it!
- Get a teacher, the careers advisor, or the librarian to read it for you
- Remember to **save it** – you will have several drafts so save each as a separate document so you can go back and easily include something you had taken out.



Useful websites

UCAS

<http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/undergraduate/filling-your-application/your-personal-statement#>

CIFE

<http://www.cife.org.uk/how-to-write-a-good-ucas-personal-statement.html>

Which?

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/personal-statements/five-practical-tips-to-help-with-your-personal-statement>

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/personal-statements/writing-your-personal-statement>

The Student Room

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Writing_Your_Personal_Statement

