

Writing a Personal Statement

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What to consider

To help generate ideas try using the following materials. Remember, though, the more ideas that are copied from this or any other publication, the less unique your personal statement will be. There will always be someone else who has copied the same idea and UCAS checks all statements for plagiarism.

The more evidence or examples provided the more unique the statement. To provide examples consider the following sections. Do not feel that each section needs to be included in order to write a complete statement. Simply writing about the choice of course and some personal details/achievements is enough to be persuasive.

Don't try to write your complete statement in one go, take your time, choose one section at a time and write down your ideas. Then try and put the sections together, see what works .



How do you persuade an Admissions tutor that you are keen to study their course?



Students who are motivated and interested in the course might be less likely to drop out of university (which could cost the university and the student money) so.....

Try to include some of the following to help you convince an admissions tutor:

- Any relevant books / articles you have read – even writing about a short article in a chapter/journal/ a few pages in a book is going to have more of an impact than simply stating you want to study the course
- Relevant courses/modules you have studied – eg AS/A2 or Diploma topics that most interested you and why or skills you have developed that you believe to be relevant
- Relevant experiences that relate to the course – conferences, residential courses, trips, people you have met, something you have read, hobbies, future plans, something you have seen, university open days – anything relevant that will convince the admissions tutor that you have given serious thought to the choice of course
- What interests you about the course – make sure that areas you focus upon that are taught at university appear on all you choices.
- Show depth of knowledge – name names, use technical terms (as long as you understand them),
- What has inspired you to pursue this degree - where has your interest in the topic come from – a parent/grandparent, a childhood experience - show the admissions tutor this is a long held aim

What are Admissions tutors looking for?

- ✓ Interest in the degree course – most important
- ✓ No spelling or grammatical mistakes
- ✓ Motivation
- ✓ Able to balance studies with non-academic life
- ✓ Interesting person – what can you bring to the university outside the classroom
- ✓ Work experience – if relevant
- ✓ Broad skill base – e.g. team work, time keeping
- ✓ Numeracy or Communication Skills
- ✓ Explanation of unusual degree combinations – should you appear so undecided
- ✓ Future career in some cases



What should you avoid?

- ✗ Waffle
- ✗ Swallowing a dictionary
- ✗ Statements with no examples or evidence
- ✗ Very ordinary interests e.g. going down the pub
- ✗ Lying – remember the interview
- ✗ Becoming somebody you are not
- ✗ Rushing
- ✗ Thinking you can write it without advice

Use of language

The following advice should help you write a Personal Statement which is easy to read and is professionally written. Use the advice to help you connect your sentences and paragraphs as well as to vary the language you use in the statement.

Advice about using 'I'.

Beginning many sentences with 'I' is very easy to do, especially when writing about yourself. Instead, try to create varied sentences with a range of alternative starting points, for example:

Do Not Write	Instead Write
I am Captain of the Hockey Team	Being a Captain of the Hockey team
I enjoy playing sport	Having enjoyed playing football
I am studying A levels in	My A level subjects have
I enjoy socialising	Socialising is important to me because...
I have taken part in	Taking part in...
I have gained a number of skills	The skills I have gained from

Alternative phrases

In addition - "In addition to my work experience I have also gained valuable skills throughout my voluntary work"

As well as - "As well as my involvement in team games I am also keen on playing individually competitive sport."

Reinforce - "My involvement in the school voluntary programme has reinforced my decision to study a degree in Nursing"

Strengthen - "My decision to study a degree in Economics has been strengthened by my enjoyment and success in my A level course"

Furthermore - "Furthermore, I am particularly suited to a degree in Chemistry because of my love of the subject and my keen interest to further my knowledge of the subject".

Apart from - "Apart from my involvement with sports I am also involved in amateur dramatics"

Not to mention - "Being involved in the voluntary work programme not to mention my work experience, has provided an opportunity to work with a diverse range of people"

More recently - "Although I have taken part in classical music concerts, more recently I have decide to learn to play the piano."

Enabled me - "The opportunity to play in the school football team enabled me to work as part of a team"

Provided me - "The work experience provided me with an opportunity to work with a range of people"

Opportunity to - "The opportunity to work with people was provide by my work experience"

What makes an effective Personal Statement

Your personal statement should:

Discuss your choice of course

It should explain why you wish to do the course(s) you have chosen. This may be a problem for those student who have opted for a diverse range of courses. However, advice from admission tutors suggests you ensure that a clear reason is given to justify a range of different courses. Admissions tutors overwhelmingly suggest that they want students to enthuse about their course. It is here that you might talk about your career aspirations, if you have any at this stage. If you are applying for a deferred entry then you might try to explain what you intend to do in the year between finishing your course and entering university.



Show that you have skills suited to university life

It is useful to show an admissions tutor that you have what it takes to survive university life and the rigours of a Higher Education course. Hence you could mention genuine skills, which show that you are, for example, self-disciplined, self-motivated, hardworking, committed and sociable.

Show that you are somebody who will benefit from life at university

Universities spend large sums of money providing opportunities for student ranging from the obvious sporting facilities to specialist clubs and societies, theatre, extra lectures, research opportunities, as well as facilities to aid social life e.g. bars, concerts and nightclubs. You might well show that you are somebody who already takes advantage of opportunities and will continue to do so. You might even state that you are looking forward to the options available at university. Remember, at the end of the day, you are at university to study. Some students have suffered because they have not got the balance right between work and social life.

Show that you are going to benefit from the course.

It is useful to inform the admissions tutor that you enjoy your existing course by explaining which areas interest you most. You might also indicate which areas of the degree interests you. If you have chosen a course which is vocational (i.e. leads to a specific career) then you might have to indicate why you wish to pursue such a career and what experiences have influenced your decision (e.g. work experience). It might also be useful to discuss particular skills that you have developed throughout the course which will help you on the degree e.g. essay writing, note taking, problem solving.



Show yourself to be an interesting personality

Few people are incredibly outgoing, have travelled the world twice over, been captain of the hockey team and have completed a period of work experience in exactly the area suited to their degree. Most of those applying for university are under twenty years of age though increasing numbers of mature students are entering university. However, show the reader that you have seized the opportunities that have arisen however modest the experience. Be imaginative but honest about the areas which you experienced and how your interests or responsibilities may set you apart from many other students. Try to be specific (e.g. provide detail or an example) rather than general about your interests and experiences.

Starting your statement

Use the following 6 sections as suggested paragraph topics.

1 Writing about your choice of course

State your reasons for your choice of course – write out the reasons why you are applying for your chosen degree.

Reason	Explanation
Enjoy the subject	State why
Enjoy particular aspects of the subject	State which aspects
Look forward to studying in greater depth	State why
Work experience confirmed interest	How
Look forward to putting theory into practice	Anything in particular
Possess the skills required for the course	What skills
Post degree aim e.g. particular career in mind	Which career and why
Inspiration for choice of course	Who or what inspired you

Writing about your choice of course is the most important part of your statement so make it count. *You must get the admissions tutors interest right from the start.*

Start by asking yourself “ Why do you want to study your chosen course and what makes you so different from the other 500 students applying for the same course?”

2 Writing about work experience

State the skills you gained and match them to the duties you carried out on your work experience. *Try to consider the skills your chosen degree will require and give examples of the ones you possess. Write about specific work experience as part of your course as well as any part time work you may have. Remember it is not necessarily the work you did rather the skills you gained.*

Skills developed	Duties carried out which developed the skill
Communication Listening Working Independently Team Work Problem Solving Using Initiative Time management etc.	Dealing with customers or working in a team

Only write about your work experience/part time job if it

- Relates to your course at university
- Developed skills and knowledge which were of interest to you, your chosen course or life at university
- The work experience tells the admissions tutor something about you.

3 Writing about your school/college experience

Write about activities undertaken within college or school, and the skills you gained from them. Also consider if you want to carry on with these activities when you reach university. Only write about this area if you have something to say that is of interest.

Experience	What have you gained?
Class Representative Drama Production Charity events Music concerts Debating clubs University visits	E.g. Communication skills, team work, responsibility, independence

4 Writing about interests and experiences outside college

Identify and outline the key activities or experiences which you have gained in a non-educational environment. In no more than a sentence or two outline some specific details about the pursuits and then state why the experience is relevant to your application. Only write about interests and experiences outside school if you have something of interest to say, otherwise focus on other areas.

Pursuits	Relevance
Reading novels Cycling Theatre Cooking Films	E.g. Enjoy a wide range literature

5 Writing about sporting involvement

State the sports you are interested in playing not those you watch. Provide details about your involvement in the sport, e.g. success in competition, county standards, position of responsibility i.e. team captain etc. State what you have learned from being involved in your sporting activities. You might want to include the desire to continue with this sport whilst at university.

6 Writing a concluding statement

Read through your personal statement and choose either an area that you may or may not have previously mentioned and find a way of building on it for a concluding comment about your course and suitability for university. You need to finish on a good note so take your time over it.

