



Create New Article Editing Help Article's History

## Writing Your Personal Statement

Tweet

Go /iki > Applications > Personal Statement Library > **Writing Your Personal Statement**

**Writing your UCAS personal statement? Get the support you need with The Student Room personal statement builder!**



### Introduction

Personal statements are a very important part of the UCAS application service, and may often be a deciding factor. They are especially important when applying for very competitive courses, where there will be little difference between you and your fellow applicants. The following guide will hopefully help you get the most out of this key element of a university application.

### Starting

Most people find starting their statement to be the most difficult, and a blank piece of paper or computer screen can be horribly intimidating. Most people won't be able to just start writing the statement off the top of their head, so it's a good idea to jot down a few notes first. The main things to think about are:

- What do I want to study? (if you can't answer this, you should probably concentrate on working this out, rather than writing a PS)
- Why do I want to study it?
- What personal qualities, interests and experience do I have which show I am suited to study this subject at university?
- What are my other interests and skills?

These are the main things to start with. If this still doesn't help, you can look at a few more detailed starting points. Many people have trouble writing about themselves and their personal qualities, so if you're having trouble with this step, pop down to a library or bookshop and get a book out on writing CVs, which will go into this process in much more depth.

Something that has helped others is to put these headings down on a piece of paper, in a rough table, and to carry that piece of paper around. Every time you think of something, you can write it down before you forget about it. I always found that inspiration struck me as I was walking to sixth form. Unfortunately, by the time I was able to write it down, I'd forgotten it! Carry paper with you wherever you go!

### Turning Your Notes Into A Personal Statement

By this point, you've hopefully worked out what it is you want to study, and you've made some basic notes on what you want to include. Hopefully, it should get progressively easier from this point onwards. When writing a personal statement, there are certain things you want to include/leave out, and lots of important things to think about.

### Things to consider

- You've got 47 lines and 4000 characters (including spaces). If you leave lines between paragraphs - which you should - then 3500 characters is a more realistic limit.

**BBC Question Time**  
Discuss the show as it airs at 22:45

What is your most interesting subject?

Depressing places in the UK

What is the best music for studying?

Cricket World Cup discussion

Girl coming over to watch a film

Song title game

Sainsbury's thread Mk IV

I'm a Jewish Atheist, ask me anything

Best Music For Studying?

Most depressing towns and cities in the UK?

This is interesting, I've never experienced this with a girl

It's my TSR birthday!!!

Saw this girl, fancied her and turns out shes 17 (I am 30) Now my head is messed up

CTAM: Count to a million - Let's beat DS to it! (Part 6)

---

The I-SOC (Islamic Society) (X)

Do you support the inheritance tax?

CTAM: Count to a million - Let's beat DS to it! (Part 6)

Slade School of Fine Art Application Advice

University of Liverpool 2015 Medicine Applicants!! :)

Atheists, who do you believe wrote the Quran

Ask an Admissions Tutor - Peterhouse

Official Vacation Scheme Thread 2015!!!

Most depressing towns and cities in the UK?

Saw this girl, fancied her and turns out shes 17 (I am 30) Now my head is messed up

[What an ester is, how it is made, examples of esters, animal testing issues and ethics.](#)

[How did Stalin get power? Essay Plan - Russia in Revolution](#)

- Get your personal statement typed up on a word-processor, for example Microsoft Word. Then copy and paste it onto your form on the UCAS website - this allows you to run spell check easily. (Please note, though, that Word adds "curly" quotation marks and other characters (like é or ü) that won't show up on your UCAS form, so do proofread it on UCAS before submitting it to ensure it is how you typed it.)
- Have a backup of the file containing your personal statement in a different place from your original statement file, for example on a disc.
- Bear in mind that extra spaces (e.g. at the beginnings of paragraphs as indentation) are removed on UCAS.

### What should you include?

A basic list, which is by no means conclusive is:

- Interest in the course: Why do you want to spend three years studying this subject at University level
- What you've done outside your A-level syllabus or outside school that demonstrates this interest : fairs/exhibitions, public lectures, voluntary work that is relevant to your subject and shows you are thinking *beyond* the A level syllabus
- Relevant work experience (non-vocational courses like English won't require this)
- Skills and qualities required for that career if appropriate (medicine, nursing and law as obvious examples)
- Interest in your current studies - what particular topics have made an impression on you
- Any other interest/hobbies/experiences you wish to mention that are *relevant* either to the subject or 'going to Uni' : don't just list your hobbies, you need to be very selective and state clearly what difference doing these things have made to you
- Plans for a gap year if deferring entry.

### What's the most important part?

Why do I want to study this subject at University? If your PS doesn't answer this simple question above all else, then start again.

Many universities now publish their admissions criteria for each subject online. Here are the admission statements for one leading university by subject.

### What sort of structure should I use?

It isn't an essay. Start with the course/subject, and why you want to do it, then mention what else you do outside school - relevant work experience and extra curricular activities. Keep the paragraphs (and ideas) simple and to the point.

As a guide, spend around 60% of the space talking about your course, why you want to do it and how you're suited to it, and 30% on your work experience and any other activities that are relevant to your subject and 10% on any obvious career aspirations/gap year plans.

Exactly how you write your statement depends on your subject - generally people write more about work experience for vocational subjects like Medicine and Law than they would for subjects like maths or English where work experience is less important. Remember that it should be about why you want to study your chosen subject. It should not simply be an essay about what you are doing in your A-level syllabus.

Do not write your personal statement in the form of a letter. Lines such as "Dear sir/madam" or "Thank you for reading".

Avoid jokes. These can often be misinterpreted.

Never, ever, criticise your current school or college or try to 'blame' any other individual such as a teacher for any previous poor exam performance etc.

You must write in grammatically correct, and coherent, English.

### Should I talk about my qualifications?

#### Yes and No.

There's already a section on the UCAS form for this, so don't waste the space on your personal statement listing your A-level topics or UMS scores. If you have something important which doesn't go in the qualifications section, ask your referee to put it down in your reference – it will sound better if it comes from them than from you. This goes for module marks as well.

If, however, you've done a major piece of coursework on something relevant to your degree subject, you're currently studying the subject at A level that you hope to take at university or have studied topics related to your proposed degree subject then **do** mention these things. Explain in detail which part of your current studies you enjoy, what you've learnt, how it has increased your enthusiasm for the

[biology](#)

[F215 The lac operon](#)

[Biology](#)

[Medicine Stalking Page 2015](#)

edited by: hogsmeades, 1 Hour Ago

[Oxford College Pros and Cons](#)

edited by: zuzia.kru, 1 Hour Ago

[Slade school of art applicants stalking page 2015 entry](#)

edited by: monika.m, 3 hours ago

[Speech and Language Therapy undergraduate courses 2015](#)

edited by: madagascar, 13 hours ago

[Queens campus stockton](#)

edited by: sydneybridge, 18 hours ago

### Spotlight

[Midwifery applicants 2015/16](#)

[Official Vacation Scheme Thread 2015!!!](#)

[This is interesting, I've never experienced this with a girl](#)

[It's my TSR birthday!!!](#)

[What is your most interesting a-level?](#)

[The I-SOC \(Islamic Society\) \(X\)](#)

[Do you support the inheritance tax?](#)

[CTAM: Count to a million - Let's beat DS to it! \(Part 6\)](#)

[Slade School of Fine Art Application Advice](#)

[Atheists, who do you believe wrote the Quran](#)

subject, and any extra reading you've done as a result of this.

### How do I write it for two different courses?

There's no easy way to write a personal statement for two totally unrelated courses. If the courses are similar (i.e. business studies and economics) you may find you can write a statement relevant to both, without mentioning either subject by name. If the courses are completely unrelated, it may be impossible to write for both subjects without your personal statement sounding vague and unfocused. Instead you will need to concentrate on just one subject and ignore the other – it sometimes works!

### How do I prioritise my ideas?

A simplistic approach is to include anything about the course towards the beginning of the statement, and anything that's less relevant towards the end.

A very simple structure might be:

- Introduction: Why do you want to do the course, how did you make your decision, show your enthusiasm for the subject - why do you want to spend three/four years at Uni studying this subject in depth?
- Relevant work experience [for vocational degrees only - for non vocational courses relevant work experience isn't necessary so can be left out of a PS if you haven't done any] and subject relevant extra-curriculars : anything that you've done which is relevant to the subject can go here. Also briefly mention any career aspirations.
- Enthusiasm for current studies and specific examples of current work that you enjoyed.
- Skills and qualities: What skills and qualities have you demonstrated that will you need to do this course. Do NOT just list skills though, give examples of circumstances when you've displayed or used those skills - in fact you don't even have to mention the "skill" at all.
- Anything else: This paragraph usually contains brief details of what else you do with your life besides studying. Try to link it with the course or subject you are applying for, or to having the required maturity to 'going to University'. If you're deferring entry, an explanation of your gap year plans can go here.
- Conclusion: Sum up why you think the university would want to make **you** an Offer.

### Things that will make little or no difference to a UCAS application

- Positions of Responsibility like Prefect or Head Girl. Universities aren't impressed by this as they will have no idea how or why you got the job - and it tells them nothing about your intellect or *academic* potential
- Expensive voluntary work overseas. If its obvious that you were able to do this only because of your parental income it won't impress an Admissions Tutor at all. They know that you'd get the same experience of 'life' working in your local charity shop once a week.
- Work experience that you only got because of your parent's job or social status. Work experience at one leading Law firm might be excusable, anything more than that looks suspicious.
- Clever remarks about leading academics in that subject. You'll just look immature.

### A Summary of Dos and Don'ts

#### DO

- Remember that your personal statement is **your personal** statement, not an article written about your prospective field of study - it should tell us about **you**, not about the subject.
- Discuss your personal statement with your tutor and other teachers.
- Only put in things you are prepared to talk about at interview.
- Show your personal statement to as many people as possible. Ask them what you've left out, what you could have put in a better light, and what you've over done. Be careful of plagiarism though - only share your PS with people who aren't applying this year.
- Give convincing reasons for why you want to study the course - more than just "enjoying the subject" (this should be a given).
- For very competitive courses, find out as much as you can about the nature of the course and try to make your personal statement relevant to this.
- If you have (realistic) long term career plans, make a link between these and the course you've chosen to study.
- Talk briefly about what you do outside school if this reveals anything about your suitability for University
- Be reflective. If you make a point like 'I like reading', 'I travelled abroad', say what you got from it.

- Keep paragraphs concise.

#### DON'T

- Be afraid of details - if you want your PS to be personal to you that means explaining exactly which bits or work or topics or activities you've taken part in/enjoyed. It's much more compelling to read about one or two detailed examples than paragraph that brushes over 5 or 6.
- Just list what you're doing now. You should pull out the experiences that are relevant to the courses for which you're applying.
- Mention skills and activities without giving examples of when they have been demonstrated or what you learnt from them. Anyone can write "I have great leadership skills" in a PS, actually using a sentence to explain when you demonstrated good leadership skills is much rarer and more valuable.
- Refer to experiences that took place before your GCSEs (or equivalent)
- Mention interests without being more specific - for reading mention authors or genres, likewise with music or art - mention particular artists.
- Exaggerate, lie or show off.
- Give explanations about medical or mental health problems. These must be explained in your reference, not your PS.
- List academic books you've read unless you can state *why* you read them and what you got out of reading them
- Apply for too many different courses, making it difficult to write a convincing personal statement which supports the application.
- Write a statement specific to just one institution, unless you're only applying to that one choice.
- Copy and paste the statement from somewhere else! This means do not plagiarise. All statements are automatically checked for plagiarism by UCAS, those that are highlighted by the computer system are checked manually by UCAS staff. If you are found to have plagiarised parts of your statement, the universities you apply to will be informed and it could jeopardise your applications.

#### Top 10 most overused UCAS personal statement opening sentences

- 1. I am currently studying a BTEC National Diploma in ... (used 464 times)
- 2. From a young age I have always been interested in ... (309 times)
- 3. From an early age I have always been interested in ... (292 times)
- 4. Nursing is a very challenging and demanding career ... (275 times)
- 5. For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with ... (196 times)
- 6. "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only" ... (189 times)
- 7. Nursing is a profession I have always looked upon with ... (178 times)
- 8. For as long as I can remember I have been interested in ... (166 times)
- 9. I am an International Academy student and have been studying since ... (141 times)
- 10. Academically, I have always been a very determined and ... (138 times)

Source UCAS (2013)

**The Guardian has a range of short articles about writing Personal Statements for specific subjects [HERE](#).**

#### Cool Tips

- Listen to Hemingway and cut back ruthlessly. Building up is the easy part.
- Don't lecture the admissions tutor on their subject.
- Introductions are best kept short
- No flowery language. Keep it simple.
- Avoid all fire-related metaphors (sparked, ignited, etc.)
- Don't use hackneyed phrases like 'I've always been interested in...' (no you haven't) for any subject or 'I just want to help people' if you are applying for Medicine, Nursing or Social Work.
- A sense of quiet confidence is the key. No modesty and no arrogance.
- Try to make it flow. The first and last sentences of each paragraph can help link it up.
- Extra-curriculars aren't the main thing. Write about your subject and why you want to do it.
- Always say exactly what you mean.

#### Applying for very competitive courses/subjects or Universities

You will be up against hundreds of equally well-qualified candidates. You need to make your PS interesting enough that they want to interview you - and not the other person. You will do this by writing a well thought out, serious statement that *illustrates* your abilities. Think about the very high intellectual abilities required to study that subject or at that University. Write accordingly.

#### After You've Written It

## All Personal Statement Articles

- **Writing Your Personal Statement**
- Personal Statement FAQs
- Subject guides to writing a Personal Statement
- Personal statement help from The University of Reading
- Personal Statement Library
  - Personal Statements by Subject
  - Personal Statements by University
  - Add your PS to the library

Category: Personal Statements

Recent Changes    Special Pages - Pages with useful functions.

# 177,531

ESSAYS

# 23,586

mindmans

# 26,205

revision notes

# 11,903

quizzes

# create

a study planner

# thousands

of discussions

Search study resources

e.g. Romeo and Juliet

© Copyright The Student Room 2015  
all rights reserved

The Student Room, Get Revising and  
Marked by Teachers are trading  
names of The Student Room Group  
Ltd.

Register Number: 04666380 (England  
and Wales), VAT No. 806 8067 22

Registered Office: International House,  
Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XE

### Info

About The Student Room  
Advertise  
Contact Us

### Connect with TSR

Follow TSR on Twitter  
Find us on Facebook

### Shortcuts

Home  
Forums  
Articles  
Study help  
Personal statements  
University  
Health & relationships  
Postgrad  
Careers  
Finance  
Hobbies & interests  
Debate & current affairs

### Get Started

Today's posts  
Unanswered posts  
Polls  
University Connect  
Photo albums  
TSR Group  
Marked by Teachers  
Get Revising

### Using TSR

Community guidelines  
Cookies and online safety  
Mod team (staff/supporters)  
News, help and feedback  
Terms and conditions  
Privacy policy  
FAQs and help