

# Library Helpsheet



## 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](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Writing_Your_Personal_Statement)

