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Personal statements

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Aims

- Understand how universities use personal statements
- Know what should be included in a personal statement
- Understand how to talk about your skills and experiences





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University selection processes



UCAS application form

- Strong academic profile with specific subject requirements
- Compelling personal statement
- Strong teacher reference



UCAS application scoring

- GCSEs
- A Levels
- Subjects studied
- National admissions tests
- Personal statement
- Reference
- Interviews





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Personal statement quiz



How many personal statements can you submit?

A. Only one for all five choices

B. One for each of my five choices

C. Two, but only if applying for a joint honours course



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Universities might make your application unsuccessful based upon your personal statement?

A. True

B. False



The maximum number of characters you can use within the personal statement is...

A. 4,000 characters

B. 4,500 characters

C. 5,000 characters



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In general how much of your personal statement should focus on academic content

A. 70%

B. 80%

C. 90%



Your statement may be flagged as plagiarised if...

A. it has 20% similarity to another statement

B. it has 15% similarity to another statement

C. it has 10% similarity to another statement



What is the most common way to open your personal statement?

A. I am applying for this course because

B. From a young age I have been

C. For as long as I can remember I have



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What are universities looking for?



Personal Statement

- A genuine interest for the subject(s)
- Intellectual curiosity
- Understanding of subject outside of normal studies
- A well-rounded individual (evidence of extra-curricular activities)





Examples are key

Demonstrate

Give specific examples and evidence what you are saying.

Evaluate

Express your opinion concerning any research/reading/work experience you have done.

- Do you agree or disagree with a particular argument or hypothesis?
- Do you think a particular approach in a working environment is successful/ethical/cost effective?
- How does this apply to your course?
- How will you use it?
- Are you keen to learn more – is there a module that will focus on this topic?



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Structure and content



Personal statement structure

1. Your main reasons for wanting to study a particular course
2. Analysis of a specific area of interest, related to the course
3. Analysis of academic and careers based activities
4. Analysis of extra-curricular activities

The emphasis of your statement will depend on your course choice





Academic

- Further reading and research
- Academic skills
- Masterclasses / MOOCs / Taster lectures / summer schools

**Remember to
demonstrate and
evaluate**



Careers

- Skills and knowledge gained from work experience
- Particularly relevant to professional courses
- Showcase your insight into the career area

**Remember to
demonstrate and
evaluate**



Extracurricular

- Skills gained from clubs, societies, sports, hobbies, volunteering, etc.
- Link to your course where possible
- Be selective

**Remember to
demonstrate and
evaluate**



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How to start your personal statement



Activity 1 – Mind map

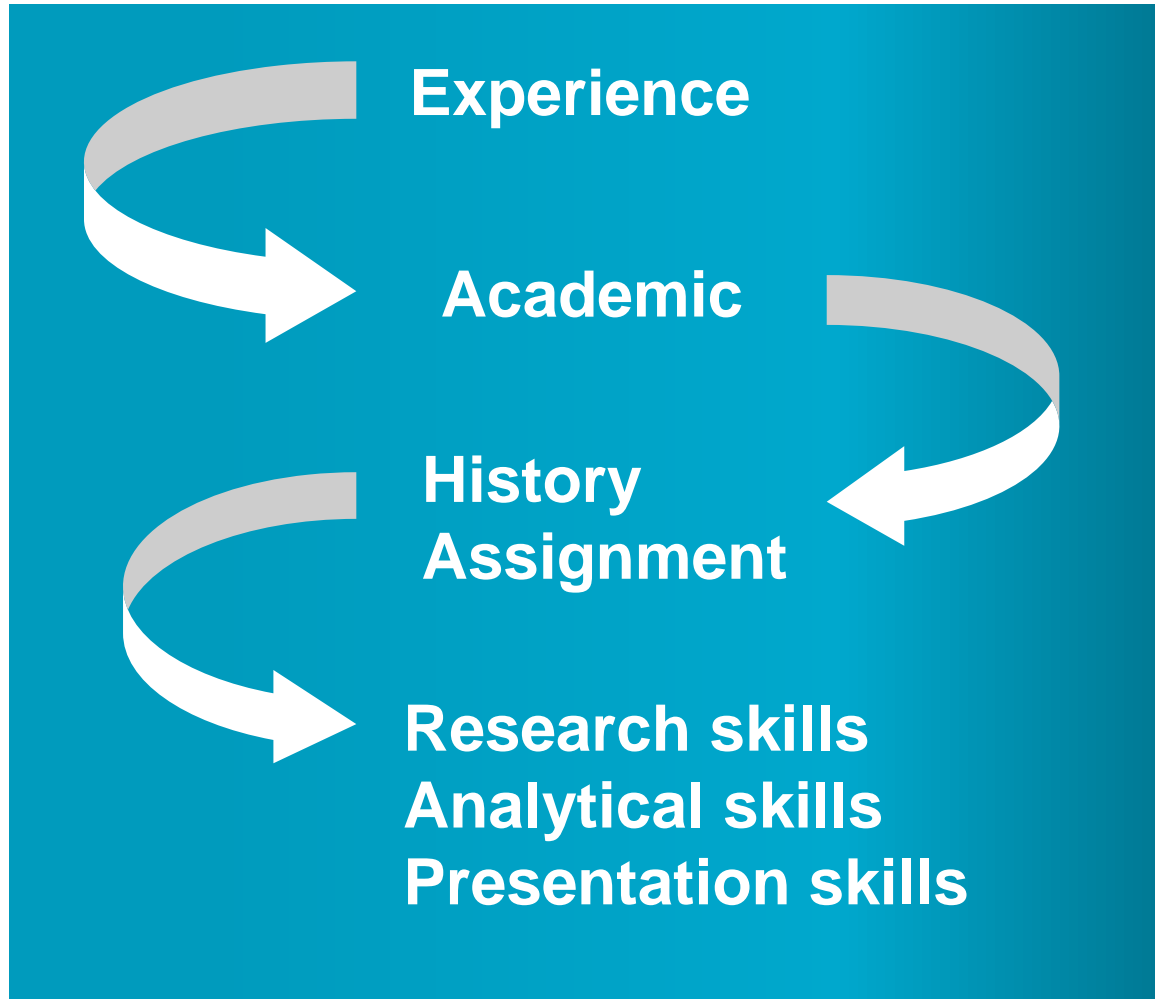
- 1.) Mind map your experiences from last 2 years
- 2.) List relevant skills you might need for the course/career
- 3.) Match your experiences to the list

**This will help you
to *demonstrate*.**





How to start your personal statement





How to talk about your skills and experiences





How to start your personal statement





Activity 1 – Mind map

- 1.) Mind map your experiences from last 2 years
- 2.) List relevant skills you might need for the course/career
- 3.) Match your experiences to the list

**This will help you
to *demonstrate*.**





Questions to ask yourself.....

- What are my main reasons for wanting to study this course?
- What skills have I gained from my current studies?
- What further reading have you done/could you do?
- What hobbies other interests do you have?
- What ways could you gain an insight into the course/career?





Activity 2 – Subject choice

Think about the subject you'd like to study at university

Write down a few bullet points with your reasons, but **do not** mention the subject by name!

➤ ***For example:***

"I like Picasso. And drawing. And Van Gogh inspires me"...





Activity 2 – subject choice



I am really interested in how engines function and how this can power a multitude of vehicles.

From my experiences in mathematics, I like to apply equations to understand the functioning of materials.

Mechanical engineering



Activity 2 – subject choice



By studying population predictions from different countries in the form of population pyramids and the demographic transition model, I was able to understand how population was going to change in different parts of the world and how this would affect the area they live in.

Geography



Activity 2 – subject choice



I also have a particular interest in American Literature, with Fitzgerald's portrayal of the disappointment and devastation caused by the American dream in 'The Great Gatsby' being among my favourites. One of the most inspiring novels I have encountered is 'To Kill a Mockingbird', and I find Harper Lee's depiction of the social inequality fascinating

English



Activity 2 – subject choice



At school I composed a Christmas carol which was subsequently performed at the school carol concert by the choir. I had the chance to direct the rehearsals and I found it rewarding and exciting to hear it performed. I learnt directional skills and many lessons about vocal composition, which I have recently put to use in setting a Kyrie

Music



Activity 2 – subject choice



I particularly admire Louis Kahn's work - most notably the National Assembly in Dhaka, where he recreated a sense of ancient monumentality in a modern building. I wonder: How did he manage to give a physical structure a spiritual quality?

Architecture



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How to talk about your skills and experiences



Situation Whilst volunteering at a primary school

Task

(Demonstrate)

I worked with students as a tutor and mentor, providing mathematics support for students

Action

(Demonstrate
and Evaluate)

I worked with small groups of primary school students, using resources and materials to provide an overview of a topic. Through using these resources, I developed communication skills, breaking down a subject and providing examples.

Result

(Evaluate)

The students improved their understanding of subject areas, resulting in them achieving higher marks in the maths test.

How to talk about your skills and experiences

- Choose a school subject, hobby, part-time job or other activity that you are involved in
- Demonstrate and evaluate the skills you have gained using the STAR method – try to relate skills to the degree subject

S - Situation

T - Task

A - Action

R - Result





Introduction

Since I was a child, I have found myself to be utterly fascinated by how science works. I do not have to look far to find the source of my love for science. Just glancing around the living room my eyes fall upon a whole host of fascinating organisms, seen and unseen they create a brilliant miniature ecosystem with billions of tiny processes and reactions for me to sit and unpick

My main reason for wanting to study Natural Sciences is the enjoyment I take from grappling with new and complex ideas. In Physics, I am particularly drawn to the atomic scale and have developed an interest in quantum models which move beyond my current syllabus. In Biology, I enjoy analysis on a larger scale; my curiosity is fired by experimental questions such as how to model the distributions of species on islands.



Academic skills

I am especially fascinated by all aspects of human rights law and am passionate about bringing justice to people who are not able to represent themselves. Human rights are a key part in making society fair and this part of the law shows how it can be a glue that holds society together

I have developed an interest in human rights law and read up on the recent case of two women who were challenging the new law that immigrants wished to join their spouses had to pass a "pre-entry" English language test. One of the main legal issues centred on whether the new policy breached the appellants' right to a family life. I was struck by the level of uncertainty in the wording of the final judgement. Although the appeal failed, the judges stated that a "significant number" of future cases, for example, those in which immigrants had learning difficulties, would be likely to breach human rights. My research led me to reflect on the fact that the application of specific laws depends on very subtle differences in the circumstances of different cases.



Work experience

I recently set up and completed a week-long work experience placement at a local graphic design company. The experience gave me a real insight into the graphic design industry and reinforced my desire to study the subject at university

During a work experience placement with a graphic design company, I was particularly interested in the challenges of creating clear infographics. To emphasize the most important information, I experimented with combining different hooks with a range of typographic fonts. I found that the most effective solution depended on creating a clear "narrative" within the image itself.



Extra-curricular

Outside of the classroom, I have completed the Duke of Edinburgh Silver award. This helped me to develop a number of skills. I am passionate about swimming and have been a member of the school team since Year 11. During my GCSEs I was also a member of the netball team. Swimming at a high level has provided a perfect training in managing pressurised situations. As a school prefect, I help to organize events such as our recent talent show, I also take parents around the school for tours. For two years, I have worked in a busy local shop and this has developed my abilities to work with people. I feel confident interacting with people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

In completing my Duke of Edinburgh Silver award, I have developed skills in planning tasks and leading a team. I speak two different languages - English and Portuguese - and this has given me a valuable perspective in understanding different cultures. During my A-Levels, I worked in a busy shop and swam for the school team – by balancing these commitments with my studies, my ability in organising and managing my time has improved significantly

Top tips

- Start early and research
- Do multiple drafts – make each line count.
- Complete further reading and activities
- Refer to current or topical issues in your subject area
- Provide specific examples, avoid generalisations





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