



Heathcote's Guide to Writing a Personal Statement

Personal Statement

Getting started

Writing about yourself is not something that you do often, so you may need to practise writing in this particular style. It is a good idea to list your hobbies and achievements then you can decide which ones demonstrate your strongest skills and personality.

Although your statement should be tailored to the particular subject area you want to study, there are certain points that every statement should include:

- why you have chosen the course/s that you have selected;
- the reasons why that subject area interests you;
- aspects of your current studies related to the course/s that you have chosen;
- why you think you would be a good student;
- details of jobs, placements, work experience or voluntary work which you have undertaken, particularly if it has relevance to your chosen field;
- hobbies, interests and social activities that demonstrate you are a well-rounded person;
- non-accredited qualifications, like the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or Young Enterprise;
- any other achievements that you are proud of, e.g. reaching grade three piano or being selected for the county cricket team;
- positions of responsibility that you hold both in and out of school, e.g. form prefect or representative for a local charity;
- attributes that make you interesting, special or unique;
- whether you have any future plans of how you want to use the knowledge and experience that you gain.

Remember that you only write one personal statement which should be relevant to all your university choices. Therefore try to allow some consistency in your course choices. If you are applying for a joint course you will need to explain why you are interested in both aspects of this joint programme.

Please remember the Personal Statement should be 2/3 – 3/4 academic.

Dos and Don'ts when constructing your personal statement

Do brainstorm your ideas on paper before attempting to write anything.

Do aim to use about six paragraphs, making sure that each one flows in a logical way.

Do expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.

Do ask people you trust for their feedback.

Do ensure that you use your best English and do not let silly spelling and grammar mistakes spoil your statement.

Do be enthusiastic – you can have perfect grades, hundreds of extra-curricular activities and be a really great person but if admissions selectors feel that you are not committed to your course, you will not get a place.

Don't overuse 'I' at the start of a sentence.

Don't feel that you need to use fancy language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you are not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.

Don't waffle on about things which are not relevant. If you feel you are starting to ramble, take a break and return to your statement when you are feeling more focused. Make your personal statement relevant.

Don't try to be funny as admissions tutors may not share your sense of humour.

Don't lie – if you stretch the truth you may fall down at interview when you are asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement. It is also an offence to lie on your UCAS application.

Don't copy someone else's personal statement or 'borrow' chunks from existing personal statements. UCAS uses anti-plagiarism software (Detection Similarity Software) which can detect when a personal statement is not someone's own work, and your application will be returned to you if this is the case.

Don't rely on a spell-checker – proof read as many times as possible.

Don't leave it to the last minute – you will kick yourself. **All personal statements must be with Mr McCarney before October Half Term.**

Don't expect to be able to write your personal statement whilst watching TV – this is your future, you only get one chance, and it's down to you!

Don't use the words 'passion/passionate'.

Don't allow your personal statement to become a list of things you have done.

Here is a suggested format for a Personal Statement:

Paragraph 1:

Demonstrate why you are interested in your chosen subject and why you want to study it at university.

- Mention the personal experiences, which have led to you making the decision to study this subject.

Paragraph 2:

What have you done that is related to your subject, talk about specific components on your A-Level course that have interested you and how they will relate to your chosen degree. Provide evidence of any relevant further reading or research you have done.

Paragraph 3:

Discuss your relevant work experience and school activities (e.g. being a school prefect, organising a study circle, include university summer schools, or public speaking activities), which have allowed you to develop the competencies you need to meet the challenges of your course.

Paragraph 4:

Discuss your other paid, unpaid or voluntary work, which, whilst not directly related to your subject, have enabled you to develop the skills that can help you to excel.

Paragraph 5:

Discuss your interests, hobbies and the other pursuits that you have been involved in outside of school (e.g. Are you the captain of your local rugby team? Do you contribute towards your community in some way?).

You should really try to demonstrate the experiences which show that you are a reliable, responsible and interesting person. For example, you could mention: taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise schemes, sporting activities, captaining sports teams, musical achievements, language skills, gap year experiences (if you are applying post A-level), or volunteer work.

Paragraph 6:

What are your ultimate career aims and ambitions? What do you want to achieve by going to university and studying this subject? Finally, provide a closing comment that finishes everything off in a succinct manner.

N.B. If you plan to take a gap year, it is necessary for you to refer to this in your personal statement. Explain your motivations for doing so, and give an insight into the skills, knowledge and achievements you plan to gain from it.

Activity	Tick	Description	Why has it made you more suitable?
Outside reading	√	Reading the Economist regularly	Understanding economic concepts Keeping up-to-date with current affairs
Theatre trips			
Exhibitions			
School clubs			
Clubs outside of school			
Voluntary work			
Museum trips			
Historical sites			
Trips abroad			
Community activities			
Documentaries			
Articles			
Hobbies			
Work experience			
Competitions/ prizes/ awards			
Published work			
Workshops/ programmes			
PP: Sixth			
Summer school			
Career aspirations			
Other 1			
Other 2			