

UCAS

GILLINGHAM SCHOOL  
Writing Your Personal Statement

# Personal Statements

- This type of document is required by many, whether as part of a university or college application, an application for an apprenticeship or a CV.
- Even if you are not going to university, please do read the advice given. The thought process, ideas and requirements for a university Personal Statement are the same as those required on most other application forms.

# Why is a good personal statement so important?

Recent figures show that the number of 18 year olds applying to university in the UK continues to **rise** – in 2020 the proportion was 41.5% of all 18 year olds – 729,000 applicants!

A record 37% of all 18 years olds were accepted with 570,000 being placed at university.

University Admissions Teams do not interview for the vast majority of courses. With numerous students applying with very similar grades, **the Personal Statement is one of the main tools used by universities to make offers on their courses.** Together with the academic reference provided by your tutor and teachers, you will need to use the Personal Statement to show universities why **you** deserve a place.

Last year, nearly 40% of 18 year old university applicants were **so convincing in their personal statements** that they received **unconditional** offers!

# Comments from Admissions Tutors on the importance of Personal Statements:

- ‘They are highly important’
- ‘I look for students who will be interesting to teach’
- ‘It is the only way to tell those who are really interested in the subject from those who are just good at it’
- ‘They provide the information needed in a meaningful interview’
- ‘A good Personal Statement can make all the difference for borderline cases’

**The main concern of Admissions Tutors is to read about your intellectual/academic potential, commitment, curiosity and passion for your chosen subject.**

# BEFORE YOU START....

Before you start – please look at some examples of personal statements. **You cannot write a personal statement without understanding what you are trying to achieve** - you can look here [Example Personal Statements](#) or you can look under a specific subject in the **Subjects Library** on Unifrog or ask Mrs Whyntie

**Subjects library**  
✕ Subjects favoured

Go to tool >

Search by keyword  
Search for university subjects using a keyword

psychology

Go >

Jan Feeley  
Psychology (BSc)  
University of Southampton

**Psychology**  
The scientific study of the mind and how this underpins behaviour

Read the profile >

Psychology

Jan Feeley  
Psychology (BSc)  
University of Southampton

unifrog

Read Jan Feeley's story Q

- In a nutshell
- Getting in
- Decisions
- Statement**

**Here is an annotated UK Personal Statement**

I applied to study Psychology and Criminology at Southampton, Royal Holloway and Swansea, as well as Psychology at Liverpool and Oxford Brookes. I received offers from all five of my universities.

I became interested in the relationship between human behaviour and the brain when my Gran was diagnosed with Dementia. As I watched her condition deteriorate I noticed her behaviour became increasingly abnormal. This led me to question what parts of the brain led to her deteriorating so quickly, particularly her memory. My growing interest in the link between the biology of a person and their behaviour was what originally drove me to study Psychology A Level. I was intrigued by the reasons human behaviours are so dissimilar, and what causes the differences. Is the brain solely responsible for our behaviour? Or is our behaviour a result of a combination of both the brain and the environment?

It's a good idea to start with why you are so passionate about your subject as this will be the part of the Personal Statement which is unique to you (and therefore it will be the part which makes

# Use UNIFROG to write your personal statement

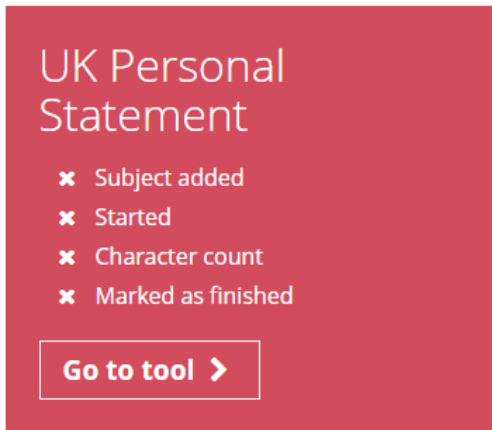
<https://www.unifrog.org/student/personal-statement>

Unifrog will help you to construct your personal statement section by section and has lots of helpful hints and information to make sure you include everything you need to.

It will also enable you to easily share your personal statement with your tutor and teachers before copying it to your UCAS application.

There is a guide 'How to use the Unifrog Personal Statement Tool' on the UCAS UCAS & University Teams Pages in the Personal Statements file and your tutor will also have a copy.

Once you have explored what a personal statement should look like use Unifrog [www.unifrog.org](http://www.unifrog.org) to create your personal statement:

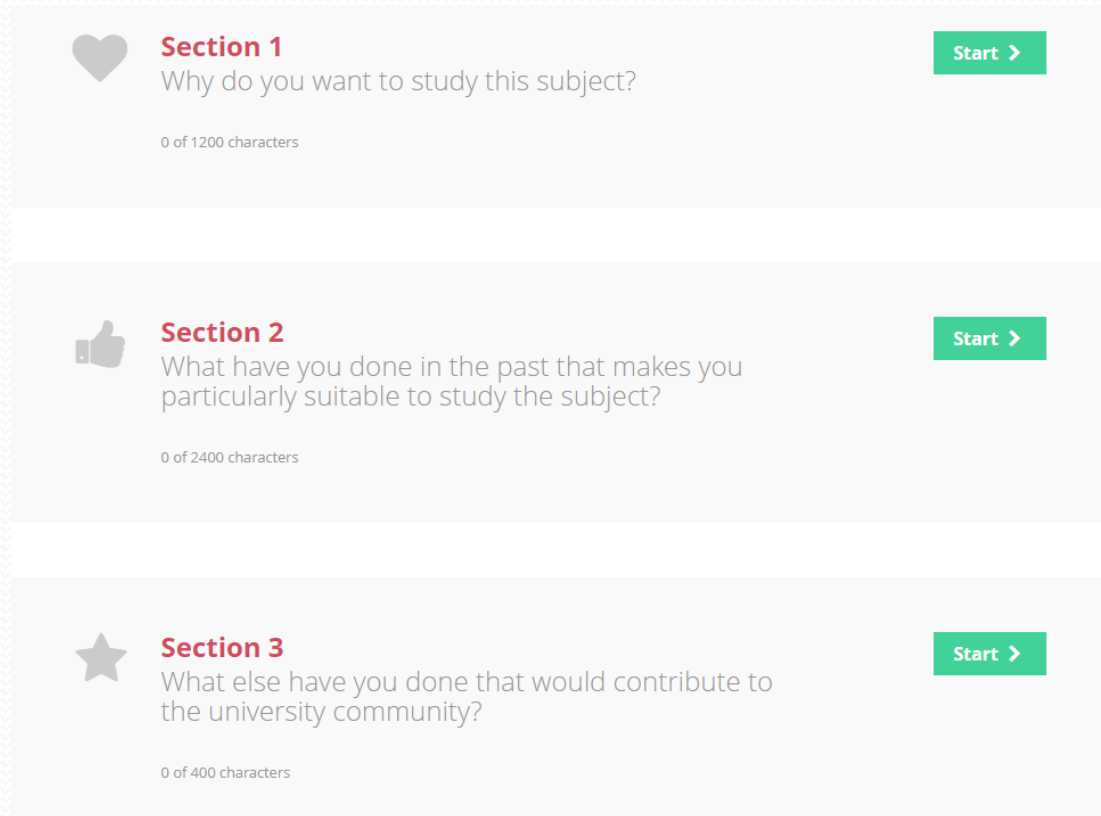


UK Personal Statement

- ✗ Subject added
- ✗ Started
- ✗ Character count
- ✗ Marked as finished

Go to tool >

The tool splits the writing of the personal statement into three sections that we will look at in a moment (or you can write it in one go)



**Section 1** Why do you want to study this subject? Start >

0 of 1200 characters

**Section 2** What have you done in the past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject? Start >

0 of 2400 characters

**Section 3** What else have you done that would contribute to the university community? Start >

0 of 400 characters

Once you have finished each attempt, you can email it to your tutor and a **subject specialist teacher** for advice.



Under each section, click on the plus sign alongside each question to get useful hints...

https://digital.ucas...

- 1 Why this subject
- 2 Your suitability
- 3 Other interests

### Section 1: Why do you want to study this subject?

This part should make up 30% of the total statement

[← Back](#)

Examples of what you may want to write about:

#### 1. Your knowledge of the subject area

**Be specific - write about your key academic interests in the subject.**

Law example: *"Having lived in Singapore for nine years, my interest in studying law was originally sparked by the notorious legal system in the country. I read into their laws and policies on crime, safety, and racial quotas, and began exploring criminal law in different countries, comparing their laws and crime rates to see the impact of the legal system in different countries. Studying law will help me develop my research and analysis skills, and improve my ability to construct meaningful, well thought out arguments to support my ideas."*

#### 2. What interests you the most about the subject area?

#### 3. What skills do you hope to develop in studying this subject?

#### Personal Statement Dos

#### Personal Statement Don'ts



**Current Version**

Your entries are saved automatically

# SECTION ONE – Why do you want to study this subject?

## The opening paragraph....

- Please do not just sit there with the cursor flashing trying to think of where to start...
- Many students find that a good introduction will emerge from another part of their statement.
- Some students use quotes, which are fine if it truly reflects how you feel about your subject.
- **Try thinking about your own personal trigger** - Where did your curiosity and enthusiasm for the subject originate?


# Here are some tips received by UCAS from Admissions Tutors:

- 'Do not waste time trying to think of a catchy opening; it often does not create the desired impression'
- 'Your interest in the course is the biggest thing. Start with why you chose it.'
- 'The best personal statements get to the point quickly.'
- 'Start with a short sentence that captures the reason why you are interested in studying the area you are applying for and that communicates your enthusiasm for it.'
- 'Go straight in. Why are you excited about studying this course?'
- 'The opening is your chance to introduce yourself, to explain your motivation for studying the course and to demonstrate your understanding of it.'
- 'It is your enthusiasm for the course we want to know about. Start with that.'



- 'Write what comes naturally.'
- 'What you want to study and why should be in the first two sentences. What excites you about the course and why do you want to learn more about this subject area?'
- 'Be specific from line one.'
- 'Talk about you and your enthusiasm for the subject from the very start.'
- 'In your opening paragraph you need to show that you know what you are applying for. Do not waffle or say you want to study something just because it is interesting. Explain what you find interesting about it.'
- 'It is much better to engage us with something interesting, relevant, specific and current in your opening line, not 'from a young age' or 'I have always wanted to'. Start with what is inspiring you now, not what inspired you when you were six.'





You never know who will be reading your Personal Statement, so it does not need to be clever, witty or funny!

It does however need to be **original** – Exeter University recently quoted at an open day that they had received 309 Personal Statements that opened with

‘Since the age of 5, I have always wanted to be...’

Be specific when writing your Personal Statement!

What sparked your interest?

*Write about one or two of your examples...*

How does this relate to your chosen course?

*Link your examples to the course you have chosen.*

What do you enjoy about your current studies?

*Again, link what you currently enjoy to the course you have chosen. Address what you are looking forward to studying.*



## And then....

### **2. Section Two - What have you done in the past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject?**

- What have you done to further develop this curiosity?
- Have you done more than show an interest in the subject?
- Can you show ways in which you have started to engage and immerse yourself in the subject?
- What have you done outside of school or college?
- Why was this useful and can you link it back to the subject?

**In GCSE English Literature, I was introduced to war poets and since then I have read as much as I can. Last year, I travelled to France and visited some war graves, which gave me a true understanding of the feelings expressed in the poetry.**

# You may have already done this or could think about...

Carrying out an EPQ

Attending public lectures or relevant work experience

Extending your reading through journals or websites

Attending virtual university taster lectures and webinars

Writing for a student magazine



Trying a MOOC – a free, massive open online course found at [www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com)





You can now explain how this further study links to your chosen course.

And you also should refer to your independent study skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills, communication and team work.

**Do look** really carefully at the **Entry Profile** on the UCAS website against the specific subject:

What do you think the course/university wants from their students?

And then incorporate this in your Personal Statement.

**And then....**

### **3. What else have you done that would contribute to the university community?**

Give an account of your non-academic achievements. What have you done over the last **two** years?

- ***Paid employment?***
- ***Volunteering?***
- ***Travel?***
- ***Groups and clubs?***
- ***School ambassador?***
- ***School council?***
- ***Positions of responsibility?***
- ***Sport***

You will not be able to mention everything.

Sections 1 and 2 on Unifrog should account for **80-90%** of your Personal Statement, which is no more than **500 words in total (4000 characters including spaces)**.

Pick two or three key points and reflect on:

- What did you learn?
- Does it relate to the subject in any way?
- What are the skills you gained?
- Can they be useful to you at University?



And then....

## Concluding paragraph (Section Three)

Finish with a one or two line summary recapping:

- *Why do you want to go to university and study the course?*
- *Why do you deserve to be offered a place?*

Conclude your Personal Statement by briefly and concisely bringing it back to why you are a good choice for the course and university. Highlight how you are prepared both **academically** and **socially** for the challenge of Higher Education.

# General Guidance

## Your Personal Statement must:

- Be legible
- Be **free** from mistakes, text slang and gimmicks such as 😊 or ☹️
- Try to avoid it's, I'm etc... instead use 'it is', I am....
- Be **free** from **bold**, underlining and other such features
- Be focused
- Convey motivation and enthusiasm for the chosen course
- Be a maximum of 4000 characters (including spaces)
- Be prepared on [www.unifrog.org](http://www.unifrog.org) and, when you are happy, transferred to your application – you will find a huge amount of additional through using this tool
- Be checked by your tutor **and, if possible, a subject specialist teacher** using the easy Unifrog email process

# What you must try not to do:

1. Begin like a life story
2. Use language that you do not understand
3. Make sentences too long or make grammatical errors
4. Repeat information
5. Offer clichés
6. Over-exaggerate or describe yourself as just perfect!
7. Submit the Personal Statement without it being checked **many** times.

# Top Tips are:

- Always start by reading some example personal statements
- You can plan out the structure with bullet points and headings, and then turn these into full sentences
- Or you could start with a mind-map
- Take your time writing it – you do not have to complete it in one go – step away and come back to it
- Check everything many times before submitting it
- Keep a copy in case you are called for interview – you will be asked about what you have written
- **DO NOT plagiarise!**
- Read your Personal Statement out loud – you will pick up errors easily this way and you will find out if it reads fluently and makes sense
- Ask for help

# Plagiarism software

Following a test case on Medicine applicants – plagiarism software is now used.

(The original test case detected over 100 applications with identical passages of text.)

Applications will not be stopped but universities involved will be contacted – any action will then be up to the institution

The school has had one previous case where plagiarism was detected. The school was informed and the applicant received **no** offers.

**Do not be tempted to do it!**



## And remember:

- This is a ***personal*** statement – it is **your** voice universities want to hear.
- There is no such thing as a ‘perfect’ Personal Statement.
- The Personal Statement should show an interest in a course that you have thoroughly researched, give the universities some insight into you as a person and should be used as an opportunity for you to sell yourself, without going over the top! It should be persuasive but not pushy.
- As you write the Personal Statement, you should be asking yourself ‘why’ and ‘how’ does this relate to my chosen course.
- Start early and redraft, redraft, redraft! It will not get written in a week or two. You will need to keep coming back to it...

# **Do Ask for Help...**

**Please always ask for help if you are struggling and do start your personal statement as soon as you can.**

**The Summer Holidays are an ideal time to spend time on it.**

**GOOD LUCK!**