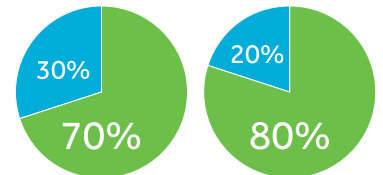


## Developing your students' skills and knowledge prior to application

To make a strong application your students need to develop their subject knowledge, interests and relevant experience. The balance between subject knowledge, skills and experience will depend on which universities and courses they are applying for.

In general, around 70% to 80% of a personal statement should relate directly to the courses applied for and focus on academic interests, knowledge and ability.



Knowledge of  
the subject ⓘ

Transferable  
skills ⓘ

Work  
experience ⓘ

### Knowledge of the subject

Encourage your students to build their knowledge of the subject and become further acquainted with the key topics and themes. They should be able to express their views and thoughts and comment on key developments in that subject.

There are some excellent resources to help build your students' knowledge and many of them are free. Here are our top sources:



#### 1. Newspapers and news websites

These will help your students keep up to date with the latest developments and thinking in their subject. Many newspapers focus on different topic areas (for example, science) on certain days of the week.

Some schools and colleges subscribe to certain publications that are then made available to students. Encourage your students to share their views on these latest developments.

#### 2. Specialist periodicals and magazines

These are great for providing further insight into the subject. For example, psychology applicants could read **The Psychologist** and those interested in science could read **New Scientist**. Often these magazines have good websites, so a subscription is not always necessary.





#### 3. Sample reading lists

Many universities publish sample reading lists for some first-year courses. This material can be a useful introduction to the subject at university level.

#### 4. Online resource banks

There are some very useful websites that provide subject resources.

**Bright Knowledge** ⓘ is a bank of resources with articles and revision guides for most subject areas. Many universities have developed online learning programmes that are designed to support students' learning about particular subjects. **Future Learn** ⓘ has a list of the programmes available.

5. Encourage your students not just to read but to experience the subject too. Encourage them to download lectures and podcasts and to visit museums, theatres and places relevant to the subject. Many universities have podcasts, lectures and MOOCs on their websites. Also visit **TED Talks**  and **YouTube** .
6. Help your students access subject-specific outreach opportunities at universities. These can include residential summer schools, masterclasses, public lectures and online resources. **Advancing Access**  has information on opportunities available at its partner universities.
7. Some research is published in open access journals. Encourage your students to search these journals, and to look at the latest research and thinking in their areas of interest. For example, if they are interested in engineering, they may wish to look at the open access Journal of Engineering, Project and Production Management. Visit the **Directory of Open Access Journals**  for details of open access journals.
8. Local libraries and university libraries can be a good way to access relevant books and periodicals. Some universities allow school and college students to use their libraries, so encourage your students to investigate provision at your local university. University graduates are often able to access library resources and online journals as alumni. Ask graduate teachers and advisers at your school or college to check with their universities.
9. Taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) can provide your students with an opportunity to learn more about the subject. Students will be able to reference what they have learned within their personal statement.

Encourage your students to choose their sources carefully and to read intelligently. There is a lot of information available and not all of it will be relevant.

## Transferable skills

Subject knowledge is important, but for some courses it is also important that students are **able to demonstrate that they have** the skills necessary to succeed on their chosen course at university.

Students can develop their skills in many ways, through:

- work experience
- volunteering
- participation in clubs or societies
- hobbies and interests
- responsibilities within school or college (for example, being a student representative or running an event)
- their existing family or caring responsibilities.



Ask your students to consider:

- how their extra-curricular activity might support their application to university
- what they could learn about their chosen subject
- what they could learn about themselves and their skills, strengths and capabilities.

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## Work experience

Relevant work experience can help a student's application if it builds knowledge of their chosen subject or career pathway, or provides them with useful skills.

Work experience can be an essential component for application to vocational courses, such as teaching, veterinary science, medicine, dentistry, nursing, and other health-related programmes including social work and physiology. It can show that your students:

- have an understanding of their chosen profession
- can display the attitudes and behaviours essential for that profession
- are well-suited to their chosen course and career pathway.

Part-time work can be an invaluable experience. Ensure your students make the most of it by reflecting on the skills they have learned, which can include personal responsibility, time management, communication skills and multitasking.

Our resource **How do I help my students choose a university and course?**  provides some top tips on how to support your students looking for work experience.

## Reflection

It is important for students to reflect on the experiences and skills they have gained.

Encourage your students to keep diaries to log their views and thoughts on the knowledge, skills and experience they have gained.

Students can use this to prepare for their personal statements and interviews.