

Notes for teachers and advisers

This activity will help your students develop their personal statements. It covers the elements that should be included in a personal statement and gives examples for review and discussion.



Time needed: 45 minutes

We suggest that you split the time available into two sections.

1. In the first section your students will consider what information they should include in their personal statement.
2. The second section is a group activity in which students review two personal statements and provide feedback.

At the end of the session, we encourage you to give your students our personal statement checklist provided on page 5.



Aims

This activity aims to support your students to:

- develop the content for their personal statement
- build a good understanding of what makes a good personal statement.



Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, your students will be able to:

- identify what makes a good personal statement
- identify their skills and personal attributes.

This worksheet will help you develop your personal statement.
For the next **15 minutes** think about the subject area you are planning to apply for and answer the following questions.

Why are you interested in this subject?

Are there any particular aspects of this subject that you enjoy more than others?

What have you learned about the subject that has inspired you to take it to university level?

What course modules particularly interest you, and why?

What subject are you applying for?


Write down something interesting about the subject that may have been in the news or you have read about.

What are your future career plans?

What skills do you have that will help you in this subject?

Are there any aspects of your current studies that relate to the subject you have chosen?

Subject knowledge

Look at university and course websites, prospectuses and the **Prospects website**  to identify the key interests, foundation knowledge, aptitude and skills required for the courses you are interested in.

This next section helps you think about your knowledge of and interest in the subject.

Consider the content of your chosen course

What interests, knowledge or skills does this course require?

What part of the course are you most looking forward to studying, and why?

Skills

This section helps you think about your personal qualities, interests and knowledge and how these relate to your chosen course.

Consider the subject knowledge, interest and experience needed for the courses you are considering. Choose **five** relevant personal qualities or interests and complete the worksheet. Hint: Look at the Prospects and university websites to help you with this task.

Examples

Note: This is not a comprehensive list – you may wish to add to it.

<p>Commitment Communication Confidence Creative writing Dance Historical re-enactments</p>	<p>Initiative Interpersonal skills Flexibility Independent working Meeting deadlines Organisation</p>	<p>Problem-solving Programming Responsibility Teamwork Theatre Working with others</p>
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Interest, skill or attribute	How can you demonstrate this? Give examples.	Why do you need this for the courses you are applying to?

Personal statements

Read this personal statement extract and in your groups discuss what you think of it.

Personal statement 1

I am an organised and motivated person, as evidenced by my Captaincy of the school debating, judo and hockey teams, my vacation work running a youth TV station, and the fact that I'm head of school, head chorister and senior anti-bullying counsellor as well as leader of the Sea Cadets. During my GCSE year I passed crumhorn and viol-da-gamba at Grade 6, and headed a neighbourhood campaign against new housing which successfully preserved a habitat for the silverweed moth.

In my capacity as MD of our Young Enterprise company I made a £25,000 profit for charity and was awarded the Alan Sugar Gold Medal for Most Ruthless Management Apprentice.

I run, row, ballroom dance and cycle for my county and have gained a Royal Geographical Society grant to head an expedition to the Falklands during my gap year researching penguin droppings and soil fertility, although I hope this will also leave me time to spend six months teaching basic Facebook theory to underprivileged children in Uttar Pradesh. I would like to study Media at your university because...

Now compare that personal statement extract to this one:

Personal statement 2

This new understanding compelled me to gain further insight by indulging in my already keen interest in the written word. Wider reading of this varied and interesting subject has ranged from "Lucy's Child" by Donald Johanson; I found this to be engrossing when concerning the evolution of man, to the 1958 Stork and Renouf's "Fundamentals of Biology"; providing further awareness of the purely elementary concepts of the subject as a whole.

I feel that a degree in biological sciences will be highly enjoyable and both intellectually stimulating and rewarding. This will also act as a strong basis for my future career as a secondary schools science teacher, with a subject specialism in biology, after completing as Secondary Science PGCE.

As part of a volunteering programme, I committed one free lesson a week assisting Year Eight science lessons. I thoroughly enjoyed explaining some of the more basic scientific concepts to children especially developing my communication skills.

During the lessons, I found that expressing my more creative and generally nonsensical side enabled the students to enjoy science more, and in the process found myself living up to the iconic image of the stereotypical mad scientist!

To gain further work experience in science teaching, I am currently involved in dedicating one afternoon per week assisting in science lessons at a local secondary schools. I have gained experience in both lab and classroom situations, involving teaching groups of student how to measure blood pressure, the infinite joy of lesson plans and translating biological English words in Hungarian for a foreign student! I find that this all adds to the experience...

Aside from my passion for biological sciences, I have an overwhelming fondness for music ranging from Bach to David Bowie. For the past three years I have been teaching myself to play piano. I find this pursuit not only enjoyable, but challenging; I love trying my hand at harder pieces so that I am able to work at them and hear the final results.



Identify the following:

- which courses the applicants have applied to
- two positive aspects about the personal statements
- two areas of the personal statement that could be developed or improved
- the most relevant or important piece of information.



Personal statement checklist

Does your statement ...

- give an insight into your motivations, subject knowledge and interests
- provide information relevant to the courses applied for
- demonstrate your own thinking and ideas
- include evidence of relevant skills and experience
- reflect on what you have learned from your experiences
- focus on the positives?

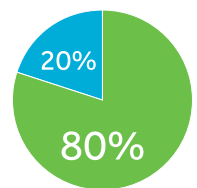
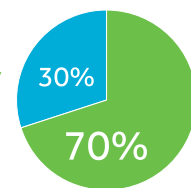
Make sure your statement ...

- is in your own words
- avoids jokes
- contains the truth.

Carefully check your statement for ...

- spelling and grammar.

In general, the personal statement should be 70-80% about your **academic interests, knowledge and ability** and 20-30% about your **other relevant skills and attributes**.



For more information see our [Personal statement information sheet](#)  which has some top tips.