



Top ten tips for personal statements

Getting the right balance, avoiding lists, arrogance, and clichés... our Access Team advises you on writing your personal statement.

Tip 1. Be honest: If invited to interview, you may be asked about anything you include in your statement!

Tip 2. Avoid clichés: "I have always wanted to study Physics" - really? Instead, try to be specific and write about your interest in detail.

Tip 3. Avoid using the same word(s): "I find that studying the lives of people in the past is fascinating, and I have recently become particularly fascinated by the way that history is affected by people's perceptions and biases. I also find it fascinating that..." Try to mix up the language.

Tip 4. Don't copy another personal statement: "Ever since I accidentally burnt holes in my pyjamas after experimenting with a chemistry set on my eighth birthday, I have always had a passion for science." According to the BBC, this statement was found in 234 personal statements in 2007. UCAS screens applications for plagiarism so it's really important that you avoid copying stories/sentences from personal statements published online.

Tip 5. You don't need to be quirky: "My interest in Biology began when my pet cat Snuggles died and I performed an autopsy." Instead, it's worth focusing in more detail on your personal interest in the subject that you're applying for.

Tip 6. Get the right balance: the Russell Group advises that no more than 20% of your personal statement should focus on irrelevant extra-curricular activities. Relevant academic activities - like related work experience, reading books, watching documentaries (aka 'supercurricular' activities) - should take up the majority of the statement, as they will more clearly reflect your commitment to the subject and your enthusiasm for studying it at university level.

Tip 7. Don't write a list. Although it may be useful to highlight these 'supercurricular' activities, tutors aren't necessarily looking for a long list of resources that you've read/engaged with. Instead, try to discuss the ideas that have arisen from your research in a little more depth - e.g. What do you agree with? What questions do you have? What don't you agree with? What would you like to learn more about at university level?

Tip 8. Avoid arrogance: Be confident, but not arrogant. If you already knew everything, you wouldn't be applying to go to uni!

Tip 9. Check for spelling and grammar: "Biology is a fascinating discipline what help's us to understand are world and wear it might be going." ?

Tip 10. Finishing touches: Make several drafts; edit it down to the character count; get it checked; read it out loud; and keep a copy.