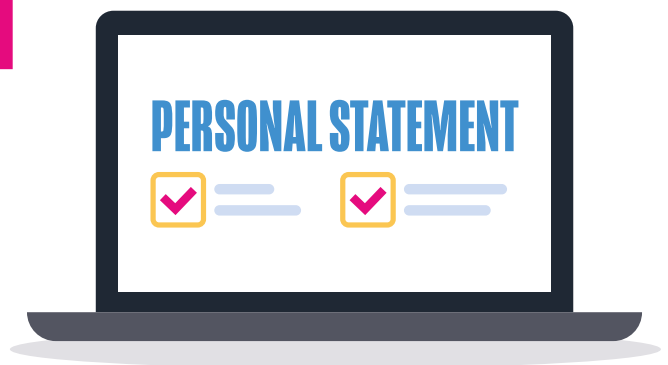


ADVISER GUIDANCE

TOP TIPS FOR STUDENTS WRITING THEIR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Use this list of **top tips** to help guide your **students** through the process of writing their **personal statement**.



GENERAL TIPS:



Take your time: Encourage your students to start early, allowing them plenty of time to reflect on their experiences and how they relate to their chosen course.



Be authentic: Remind students that admissions tutors want to get to know the real them, not a version that tries to imitate someone else.



Avoid overused quotes: Advise students to use their own thoughts and to steer clear of clichéd quotes. Their unique perspective is what will stand out.



Focus on one course: If possible, guide your students to concentrate on one course or closely related subjects so that they can focus their statement and make the most of the character count.



QUESTION-SPECIFIC TIPS:

Q1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Show your passion: Encourage students to clearly express what excites them about the subject. Where did their interest begin, and how has it developed over time?

Relate to career goals: Help students to explain how the course aligns with their future career ambitions and how it will help them achieve their goals.

Highlight personal experiences: Suggest that students share any relevant experiences, whether through reading, hobbies, or family influences, that sparked their interest in the subject.

Q2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Link skills to success: Assist students in demonstrating how their academic journey has equipped them with the skills needed to excel in their chosen course. Encourage them to focus on two or three key skills and provide evidence

Showcase achievements: Advise students to highlight academic achievements that are relevant to

the course. They shouldn't just list them; they should explain how these achievements have prepared them for higher education.

Reflect on learning: Discuss with students how specific subjects or projects have deepened their interest in the course and prepared them for the next step in their education.

Q3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Include super-curricular activities: Encourage students to mention activities outside formal education that have helped them develop relevant skills, such as work experience, volunteering, or hobbies related to their course.

Demonstrate transferable skills: Highlight how experiences like part-time jobs or extra-curricular activities have developed skills such as time management, teamwork, or leadership, and how these will benefit them in their studies.

Make it personal: Remind students that this section is personal to them, so they should choose experiences that are meaningful and demonstrate their commitment and passion for the subject.



WHAT TO AVOID:

Generic statements: Encourage students to avoid vague phrases or statements that could apply to anyone. They should be specific about their experiences and why they matter.

Repetition: Advise students not to repeat the same information across the three sections. Each part of their statement should add new value.

Overloading with skills: Suggest that it's better to reflect on a few key skills and experiences rather than trying to mention everything. Ensure they have space to provide evidence for each point.



FINAL CHECKS:

Proofread carefully: Remind students that spelling and grammar mistakes can detract from their message. They should proofread their statement multiple times and consider asking a teacher or adviser to review it.

Seek feedback: Encourage students to get feedback from someone who knows them well and can help ensure their personality and strengths come through clearly.

Reflect on relevance: Ensure that students include only relevant content that supports why they're an ideal candidate for the course.



ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

1. Emphasise academic achievements:

Deep dive into academics: Encourage students to highlight specific projects, coursework, or assignments that were particularly challenging or rewarding. They should discuss how these experiences have prepared them for university study.

Passion for the subject: Remind students to explain how their passion for the subject has driven them to excel academically. If they've undertaken independent research, reading, or additional study outside of what was required, they should mention this.

2. Focus on transferable skills:

Classroom experiences: Discuss how group work, presentations, or leadership roles in the classroom have helped them develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Part-time work: If they've held a part-time job, suggest they describe how this has taught them valuable skills such as time management, responsibility, and working under pressure. Even unrelated jobs can be linked to skills that will benefit their studies.

3. Personal experiences:

Overcoming challenges: Encourage them to reflect on personal challenges or responsibilities they've managed, such as helping with family duties, overcoming health issues, or balancing schoolwork with other commitments. They should explain how these experiences have shaped their character and resilience.

Independent learning: If they've engaged in independent learning, such as online courses, reading, or self-study in areas related to their chosen subject, they should mention how these activities have deepened their knowledge and enthusiasm.

4. Showcase their motivation:

Why this course? They should focus on their strong motivation and clear understanding of why they want to study this course. Demonstrate that their interest is genuine and deeply considered, even if it hasn't been expressed through extracurricular activities.

Future goals: Advise them to connect their academic pursuits to their future career goals. They should explain how the skills and knowledge they've developed through their studies align with their ambitions.

5. Link everyday activities:

Hobbies and interests: Even if they haven't engaged in formal extra-curricular activities, hobbies like reading, writing, coding, or any creative pursuits can demonstrate their passion for the subject. They should describe how these activities have helped them develop relevant skills or insights.

Community involvement: If they've been involved informally in their community, such as helping out with local events or supporting family members, suggest they mention how these experiences have taught them valuable lessons and skills.

6. Highlight their curiosity:

Engagement with the subject: Encourage them to discuss any books, documentaries, podcasts, or articles they've engaged with that relate to their subject. They should show how they've taken the initiative to learn more about the field on their own.

Broadening understanding of the subject and related careers: Suggest they widen their research into subjects and careers by trying subject tasters and virtual work experience programmes, which they can do through Springpod on the UCAS website. These tasters and work experiences are a great way to evidence interest in a subject in their personal statement.





TIPS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS FACING ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

If you are supporting students from different backgrounds, the key is to help them understand how to frame their experiences within the personal statement format. By highlighting their resilience, resourcefulness, and determination, your students can create a powerful personal statement that not only meets the requirements but also stands out as a testament to their character and potential.

1. Focus on transferable life skills:

Responsibility and time management: If they've had to balance school with significant family responsibilities or work, they should explain how this has helped them develop strong skills such as time management, responsibility, and multitasking skills.

Problem-solving skills: Illustrate how they've developed problem-solving skills as a result of their circumstances, such as managing household responsibilities, supporting siblings, or working to contribute to the family income.

2. Highlight overcoming challenges:

Resilience and determination: If students feel comfortable mentioning their personal circumstances, support them to outline the ways in which they've overcome any challenges. They could also reflect on what their experiences have taught them, any skills and characteristics they have developed as a result, and how this has prepared them for university.

Academic achievements against the odds: Students don't have to give any details about their circumstances in the personal statement. Instead, suggest they emphasise any academic achievements, particularly those accomplished despite difficult circumstances. This can show their commitment and ability to thrive under pressure.

3. Use personal experiences:

Cultural and community engagement: Encourage them to highlight any involvement in their community or cultural activities, even if they are informal. These can demonstrate their commitment to their community and how it has shaped their identity and ambitions.

Resourcefulness: Discuss how they've been resourceful in finding ways to pursue their interests and education, such as utilising free resources, seeking mentorship, or engaging in self-directed learning.

4. Showcase their motivation and ambition:

Clear career goals: Even if their path has been unconventional, they should clearly articulate their career goals and how their chosen course will help them achieve them. Encourage them to link their motivation to their background, where relevant, and the impact they want to make in their community or field.

Drive for education: Some students desire to succeed in higher education as a way to improve their situation and contribute positively to society, and this is a great place to emphasise these ambitions. Universities value students who are passionate about making a difference.

5. Highlight community and family contributions:

Family support roles: If they've had significant responsibilities in supporting their family, suggest they explain how this has taught them valuable life skills, such as leadership, empathy, and perseverance.

Volunteering or informal work: Even if it's not traditional work experience, any volunteer work or informal jobs can be highlighted to show their work ethic and willingness to contribute and how this relates to their ambitions.

6. Address potential gaps or inconsistencies:

Explain context: If their academic record has gaps or inconsistencies due to personal or financial challenges, they should briefly explain the context. This helps admissions tutors understand their journey and take this into account when assessing their application.

Link challenges to growth: Encourage them to frame any difficulties as learning experiences that have prepared them for the rigours of university study. They should show how these experiences have shaped their character and readiness for higher education.