

UCAS Applications

Five Top Tips for the UCAS Personal Statement

Unsure where to begin your personal statement? Here are the five ingredients you need to include to cook up a great first draft. You'll get plenty of advice from all sorts of people, but these pointers are universal. If you tick them all off, you'll have something that's in excellent shape for your teachers and tutors to help you polish.

Make It Personal



It's called a personal statement for a reason - it's personal. Every great personal statement explains why the applicant wants to study his or her chosen course, and most applicants open with this essential information. **Look out:** if you can replace your name or the course title with something different and your opening paragraph still makes sense, then it's not personal enough. Change it quick!

The Pareto Principle

This is the posh term for the 80/20 rule, and it applies to the best personal statements. Really, admissions tutors accept applicants onto courses not into universities, so want students who love their subjects. **Plan ahead:** you should start with a list of course-related achievements (e.g. exam results, and books you've read) and make sure it's longer than your list of other achievements before you even start.



80 20

What Have You Read?



If you're applying for a subject in the arts (e.g. English, history of art, and philosophy), admissions tutors want to know both what you've read and your thoughts about it. After all, a huge chunk of any arts course involves reading. **Beware:** no one wants to read a bibliography! It's more important to include some key examples of interesting things you've read and your reflections on them than a lengthy reading list.

What Have You Done?

If you're applying for a vocational subject (e.g. engineering, law, and medicine), admissions tutors want to know if you've done any work experience - it's a great way to separate yourself from the herd. **Craft a story:** you could use your reflections on any work experience you've done to open your personal statement - some great personal statements hook their readers in just this way.



Put Your Teacher to Work!



Every minute your teacher or tutor spends correcting your spelling, punctuation and grammar is a minute they're not helping to improve the content of your personal statement - and, contrary to popular opinion, they're very busy. **Top tip:** get a friend or family member to proof read your personal statement before it goes anywhere near a teacher - your teacher will thank you for it, and you'll get more meaningful feedback.