

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

HOW TO WRITE YOUR
WAY TO SUCCESS



NAME

SCHOOL

DATE STARTED



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PERSONAL STATEMENT



NOW YOU ARE IN SIXTH FORM OR COLLEGE, YOU MIGHT HAVE STARTED RESEARCHING WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO STUDY AT UNIVERSITY AND WHERE TO STUDY IT.

If so, the next step is to start thinking about the application process. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the organisation that handles applications to all British universities.

Writing your personal statement is an important part of the UCAS university application process. It is your opportunity to show the university who you are and why you are right for their course.

This workbook will tell you more about the personal statement. Using the activities and tips you'll be able to write a great personal statement that can help you get the university place you really want.

APPLYING FOR A UNIVERSITY PLACE

All full-time university courses require you to apply through UCAS (www.ucas.com). This involves completing a range of sections, including;

- + Your personal details
- + Student finance (if you're planning to apply for student loans)
- + The courses/universities you're applying to
- + Education background (grades you've already got AND grades you're working towards)
- + Employment history (including part-time jobs)
- + Personal statement
- + Reference (normally provided by your school / college)



ALTHOUGH YOU CAN ONLY SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION FROM THE SEPTEMBER BEFORE YOUR YEAR OF ENTRY, YOU CAN REGISTER AT UCAS.COM AND START WRITING THE APPLICATION MUCH EARLIER.

THE UCAS APPLICATION – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- + All applications are made online through UCAS
- + You can make up to five choices on your application
- + You only complete one application form; UCAS then sends this to your chosen universities for you
- + Some choice restrictions:
 - for Medicine, Veterinary, and Dentistry there is a max of FOUR choices
 - you can apply for either Oxford or Cambridge, but not both.
 - The application deadline for these choices is 15 October, not the main deadline date
- + Application cost*:
 - If you're only making one choice – **£20**
 - If you're making more than one choice – **£26**
- + The application deadline for most courses is 15 January in the year you want to start.
- + You can apply after the deadline but applying before means it will be considered equally to all other applications.
- + Universities cannot see where else you have applied.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

WHEREAS THE UCAS APPLICATION MOSTLY ASKS FOR SPECIFIC FACTS AND DETAILS, THE PERSONAL STATEMENT GIVES YOU A BIT MORE FREEDOM TO EXPRESS YOURSELF.

The personal statement is your personal story, it is your opportunity to make your university application stand out. Once a university has looked at your predicted grades, they want to understand your interest in and passion for your subject and how those fit with your longer term goals.

Most universities will use your personal statement to help them decide whether to offer you a place on your chosen

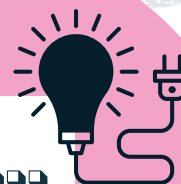
course. It is important that you take your time when writing your personal statement to ensure it's interesting. If you are applying for a course that requires an interview, your personal statement could be used as a basis for the interview. If you are called for interview, prepare to be asked about some of the things you've covered in your statement.

You don't need to create a perfect statement the first time you sit down to write something. Most people rewrite and edit their statement several times before they finally submit it. This workbook will help you through that process.

PERSONAL STATEMENT – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

- + The personal statement is your chance to sell yourself as an individual
- + You only submit one personal statement – the same one is sent to all of your chosen universities
- + The personal statement has a limit of 47 lines, or 4000 characters – around 500 words
- + There is a minimum of 1000 characters
- + You can't include any text formatting, e.g. no bold, italics or underline
- + UCAS doesn't offer a spelling or grammar check – it's up to you to get this right
- + It's read by admissions tutors or subject leaders to help them decide whether they can offer you a place on your chosen course

TOP TIP...



DON'T BE TEMPTED TO COPY SOMEONE ELSE'S STATEMENT; THE UCAS SOFTWARE WILL DETECT THIS!

BEFORE

YOU START

BEFORE YOU START THE APPLICATION PROCESS TO UNIVERSITY (INCLUDING WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT), IT'S IMPORTANT TO DO LOTS OF RESEARCH TO FIND THE UNIVERSITIES AND COURSES THAT SUIT YOU.

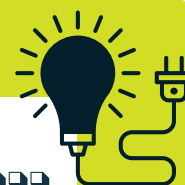
TASK

TICK THESE STEPS OFF TO ENSURE YOU'RE READY TO START THE APPLICATION PROCESS.

- **DECIDE WHICH COURSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO STUDY AND FIND THE UNIVERSITIES THAT OFFER THAT COURSE.**
- **RESEARCH YOUR CHOICES. THINK ABOUT ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF UNIVERSITY.**
- **ATTEND OPEN DAYS AT THE UNIVERSITIES (PHYSICAL OR VIRTUAL) TO GET A FEEL FOR THE CAMPUS, MEET ACADEMICS AND VIEW ACCOMMODATION.**



TOP TIP...



HAVE YOU READ THE GROWS PLAN YOUR PATH TO HIGHER EDUCATION WORKBOOK?

IT WILL HELP YOU STRUCTURE YOUR RESEARCH AND GIVE YOU TIPS ON FINDING YOUR IDEAL COURSE AND UNIVERSITY. **ORDER YOURS AT [GROWS.AC.UK/PLAN](https://grows.ac.uk/plan)**

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE HOW MUCH TIME YOU NEED OR WHEN TO START YOUR STATEMENT, UCAS SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING...

Work back from the deadline you want to submit your application by, you do not need to wait until the official deadline to submit yours.

WHEN IN Y12

- + Do lots of research around potential subjects and universities
- + Review the entry requirements of those courses
- + Attend UCAS HE fairs or university open days

AT LEAST SIX WEEKS BEFORE DEADLINE

- + Write your draft – the steps in this booklet will take you through how to do a draft
- + Get lots of people to check your draft and subsequent changes

SCHOOL DEADLINE

- + Pay the fee and let your referee know it's ready for them to provide a reference.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

AT LEAST 3 MONTHS BEFORE DEADLINE

- + Make a list of potential courses and universities and what they are looking for in a personal statement **(task on page 9)**
- + Check your school deadline as they need time to write the reference, this becomes your new deadline

AT LEAST 2 WEEKS BEFORE DEADLINE

- + Check everything including spelling, punctuation and that the statement is **less than 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text** (including blank lines).

BEFORE YOU START



WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

WRITE YOUR DRAFT PERSONAL STATEMENT ON A COMPUTER – IN MS WORD OR SIMILAR SOFTWARE – AS THIS ALLOWS YOU TO CHECK YOUR SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR AS YOU GO.

That way, when your final statement is ready, you can simply copy it into the UCAS form. Remember, there isn't a spellchecker in the UCAS form so any spelling mistakes will not show up, so do a final read-through before you paste it in.

Don't worry about trying to make it perfect first time. It's really common to write five, ten or even more drafts before you get to the final version.

When you write drafts, you should ask for feedback each time, e.g. from teachers, family or friends. They will help you spot any errors and may provide further suggestions for you.

It's important to make sure your statement has a nice flow and uses a range of vocabulary but overall you should stick to plain English to make sure you get your point across.

It's crucial that your statement is your own work – copying other people's work is called plagiarism and you will be caught out.

WHAT SHOULD I WRITE?

REMEMBER, YOU'RE WRITING THIS PERSONAL STATEMENT TO HELP CONVINCE THE UNIVERSITY THEY SHOULD OFFER YOU A PLACE. THE KEY THINGS TO DEMONSTRATE ARE: WHY YOU'RE APPLYING, AND WHY YOU WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR THE COURSE.

Your personal statement should be relevant and course related throughout, showing your enthusiasm and commitment to your studies. The same statement will be sent to all your university choices (up to five) so it is important not to make it too specific to one particular university. Use themes instead of specifics, e.g. don't say you can't wait to live by the sea if one of your choices is nowhere near the coast!

Try to relate each theme you include to your subject/course by using relevant examples. Examples should show how it will help you in your studies, e.g. it could reflect on the skills you've learnt and discuss how it has shaped your interest in the course or your future aspirations.

**WHY ARE
YOU APPLYING?**

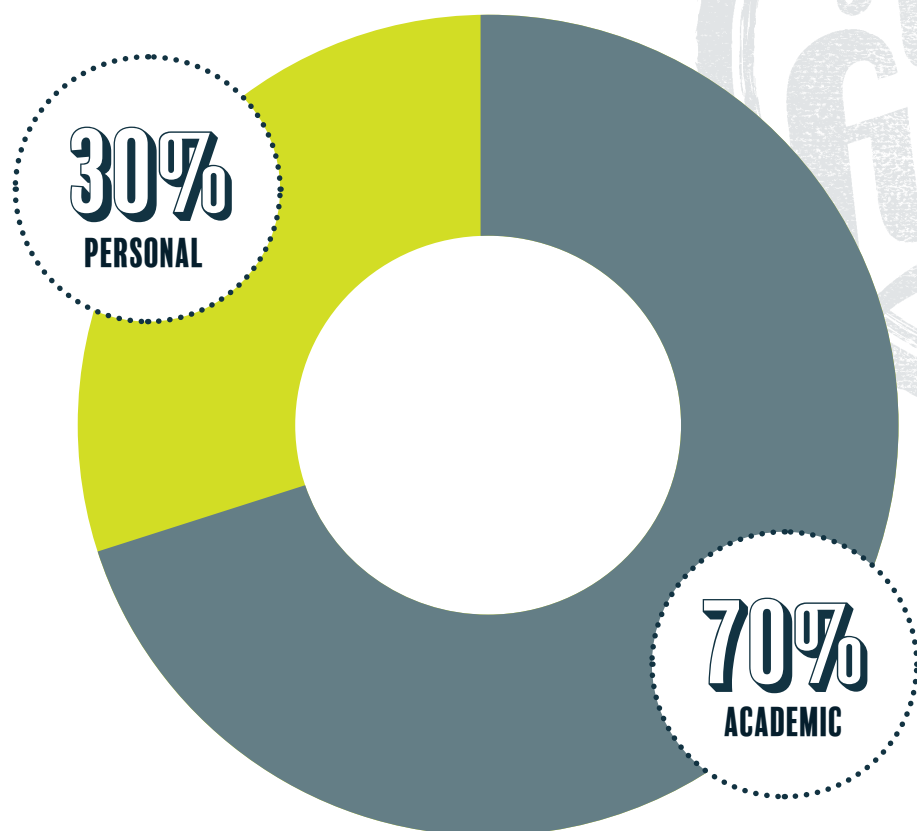


**WHY WOULD YOU
BE SUITABLE FOR
THE COURSE?**

PERSONAL

vs ACADEMIC

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE YOU INCLUDE A GOOD RANGE OF ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL INFORMATION IN YOUR STATEMENT, BUT THERE SHOULD BE MORE ON THE ACADEMIC SIDE.



ACADEMIC

IT IS CRUCIAL TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR INTEREST, COMMITMENT, ENTHUSIASM AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE SUBJECT AREA. YOU SHOULD AIM TO INCLUDE AT LEAST **THREE PARAGRAPHS** COVERING THE ACADEMIC SIDE OF THINGS.

PERSONAL

YOU SHOULD ALSO WRITE ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, SKILLS AND QUALITIES, PARTICULARLY TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THEY RELATE TO YOUR COURSE. YOU SHOULD AIM TO HAVE NO MORE THAN TWO PARAGRAPHS TO COVER THE PERSONAL SIDE OF THINGS.

PERSONAL

vs ACADEMIC



ACADEMIC – WHAT COULD YOU INCLUDE?

Before moving onto the task on the next page have a think about these questions, to help you with some academic points you could make in your personal statement. Use the space next to each question to jot down your notes...



WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR CHOSEN SUBJECT, AND WHY?	
WHERE DID THIS INTEREST COME FROM?	
WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM? E.G. EXTRA READING	
DO YOU HAVE ANY RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE?	
RELEVANT SKILLS/EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR CURRENT STUDIES OR PREVIOUS COURSEWORK	
ANY OTHER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS	

PERSONAL – WHAT COULD YOU INCLUDE?

Think about the areas below to help you with personal points you could make in your personal statement. Use the space next to each point to jot down your notes...



PART-TIME WORK	
VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE	
EXTRA-CURRICULAR HOBBIES	
FUTURE PLANS / CAREER ASPIRATIONS	
ANY OTHER PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS	

YOUR MIND MAP

COMPLETE THE MIND MAP BOXES BELOW, THINKING OF AS MANY EXAMPLES AS YOU CAN, REFER BACK TO THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 4 TO HELP.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS...

- + Hobbies, interests and social activities
- + Extra-curricular activities
- + Show your personality and abilities
- + Work experience/voluntary work

THE COURSE...

- + Why this course, this subject?
- + Why you?
- + Show that you understand what's required to study the course, skills that will help you succeed
- + Link to current studies
- + Anything else which is linked to the course.

MY COURSE...

SKILLS AND ACHIEVEMENTS...

+ General skills that will help you with the course/life at uni.

+ Other achievements e.g. Duke of Edinburgh, Head Boy/Girl etc. Things that make you more interesting/unique.

FUTURE PLANS...

+ How would you use the course in your future?

+ How does it link to what you want to do?

SO, WHERE DO I START?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING, IT COULD BE USEFUL TO RESEARCH WHAT YOUR CHOSEN UNIVERSITIES ARE LOOKING FOR IN A PERSONAL STATEMENT.

SOME UNIVERSITIES PUBLISH ADMISSIONS STATEMENTS ON THEIR WEBSITES, FOR OTHERS, YOU MIGHT NEED TO GET IN TOUCH TO ASK. MAKE A NOTE OF WHATEVER YOU FIND OUT.

WHAT DO UNIVERSITIES WANT FROM YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT?

LOOK INTO WHAT YOUR CHOSEN UNIVERSITIES MIGHT BE LOOKING FOR IN THEIR PERSONAL STATEMENT AND MAKE A NOTE OF THIS IN THE TABLE. HIGHLIGHT ANY COMMON THEMES THAT YOU MAY WANT TO REALLY FOCUS ON.



	UNIVERSITY	WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?
CHOICE 1		
CHOICE 2		
CHOICE 3		
CHOICE 4		
CHOICE 5		

You could begin your personal statement by writing down content in a list or, a set of bullet points.

Think about general themes as well as your experiences and interests – record these in note form.

You can turn these into sentences and paragraphs later.

USE THE MIND MAP ON THE PREVIOUS PAGES AND YOUR BULLET-POINTS, TO START WRITING MORE DETAILED NOTES



ONCE YOU'VE WORKED THROUGH ALL THE BOXES IN THE MIND MAP, IT'S USEFUL TO THINK ABOUT WHERE THERE ARE GAPS. ARE THERE ANY SECTIONS WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE TO TALK ABOUT? IF SO, NOW IS THE TIME TO GO OUT AND GET SOME EXTRA EXPERIENCES. YOU COULD ALSO TAKE PART IN ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES, E.G. DO SOME WIDER READING ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT.

THE OPENING SENTENCE

IDEALLY YOU WANT TO START YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT WITH A GREAT INTRO TO ENGAGE THE READER.

HOWEVER BE CAREFUL TO AVOID CLICHÉS AND TRY NOT TO BE TOO PREDICTABLE. THERE'S NO NEED TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF OR STATE WHICH COURSE YOU'RE APPLYING FOR - THEY CAN SEE THESE DETAILS IN THE REST OF YOUR UCAS APPLICATION.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMONLY USED OPENING SENTENCES...

TRY TO AVOID THEM IF YOU CAN:

- + I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO...
 - + FROM A YOUNG AGE I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN...
 - + EVER SINCE...
 - + FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER...
- OR
- + STARTING WITH A FAMOUS QUOTE

INSTEAD, GO STRAIGHT INTO YOUR FIRST EXAMPLE, THIS DEMONSTRATES YOUR PASSION FOR THE SUBJECT RIGHT FROM THE START.

Don't spend too long working on your opening sentence. The entire personal statement is really important, so make sure you leave enough time to ensure every paragraph is as good as it can be.

To help with this, you might find it useful to not write your opening sentence first. Write the rest of your personal statement, and then come back to the start later. That way, it might be easier to work out what to say at the start.

FIND OUT MORE...

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO WRITE YOUR OPENING SENTENCE VISIT [GROWS.AC.UK/TARGET](https://grows.ac.uk/target)

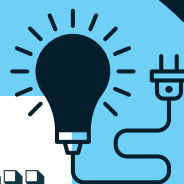
WATCH! HOW TO START YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/personal-statement-the-killer-opening



HOW TO ACE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

TOP TIP...



ONCE YOU HAVE WRITTEN
YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT,
USE THE PERSONAL STATEMENT
CHECKER TOOL AT
GROWS.AC.UK/SACU

AIM TO SHOW, NOT TELL

Your personal statement will be most effective if you can use evidence to back up what you're saying. Do this by following the rule 'SHOW, not TELL'

This means: don't just tell the reader something, **SHOW** them by giving examples or evidence. For example, a student applying to study a Geography degree might write:

"I am really passionate about studying Geography."

This is a good point, but there is no evidence to back it up. The student could expand by saying:

"I recently read an article in National Geographic magazine about the impact of climate change on the growing of crops. This got me thinking about the challenges we face in the modern world, for example making sure we have enough food for everybody when we have a growing population, despite the challenges of climate change. I'm really looking forward to exploring this further in my Geography degree."

This second example really demonstrates the student's interest in geography, by using examples and talking about specifics. This is showing, not just telling.

SHOW, NOT TELL

WRITE YOUR OWN SHOW, NOT TELL SENTENCE HERE...



ANOTHER WAY OF THINKING ABOUT THE SHOW, NOT TELL RULE IS TO APPLY THE ABC GUIDE.

ACTIVITY – State what activity you have done, e.g. wider reading or a taster course

BENEFIT – Tell us what benefit this has given to you, e.g. skills or insight

COURSE – Explain why this is relevant to your course
Rather than write a list of things you've done, explain and analyse each example as you would in your usual school/ college essays.

Example, a student who is applying to study a degree in Real Estate and has completed some work experience in an estate agency might write:

"I did a week's work experience in the office of my local estate agent."

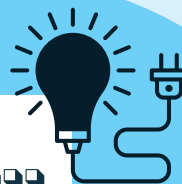
This is a good activity **(A)** but is quite vague and doesn't tell us about the benefit **(B)** or why it's relevant to their chosen course **(C)**. This student could expand by saying:

"By interacting with clients during my week's work experience in the local estate agency (A), I learned the importance of listening to the needs of the customer

in relationship building (B). This experience will help me link my Real Estate studies with real-world situations (C)."

The second example sounds more impressive because it follows the ABC guidelines:

TOP TIP...



"WE REALLY ADVISE YOU TO STICK TO PLAIN LANGUAGE SO IT'S CLEAR WHAT YOU MEAN, AND THEN PROOF READ IT TO CHECK IT MAKES SENSE."

DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE SUBJECT YOU WISH TO STUDY."

**UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS
OFFICER, RAU**

GET SOME PRACTICE

FIND OUT MORE...

WATCH THE ONLINE PRESENTATION
BY THE RAU TO SEE EXAMPLE
ANSWERS TO THE TASKS.

[RAU.AC.UK/UCAS-
APPLICATION-PROCESS-AND-
PERSONALSTATEMENTS](http://RAU.AC.UK/UCAS-APPLICATION-PROCESS-AND-PERSONALSTATEMENTS)

YOUR ABC EXAMPLE

Use the table below to think about an example of ABC you have experienced...

ACTIVITY (WHAT WAS IT?)	BENEFIT (WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS?)	COURSE (HOW DO THESE RELATE TO YOUR CHOSEN COURSE?)

SPOTTING MISTAKES

Mark up the text below to highlight any errors as well as how you think
the text could be improved. **"I really really like politic's it is important to
our world. I am also very good at politics as you can see by my grades!!!"**

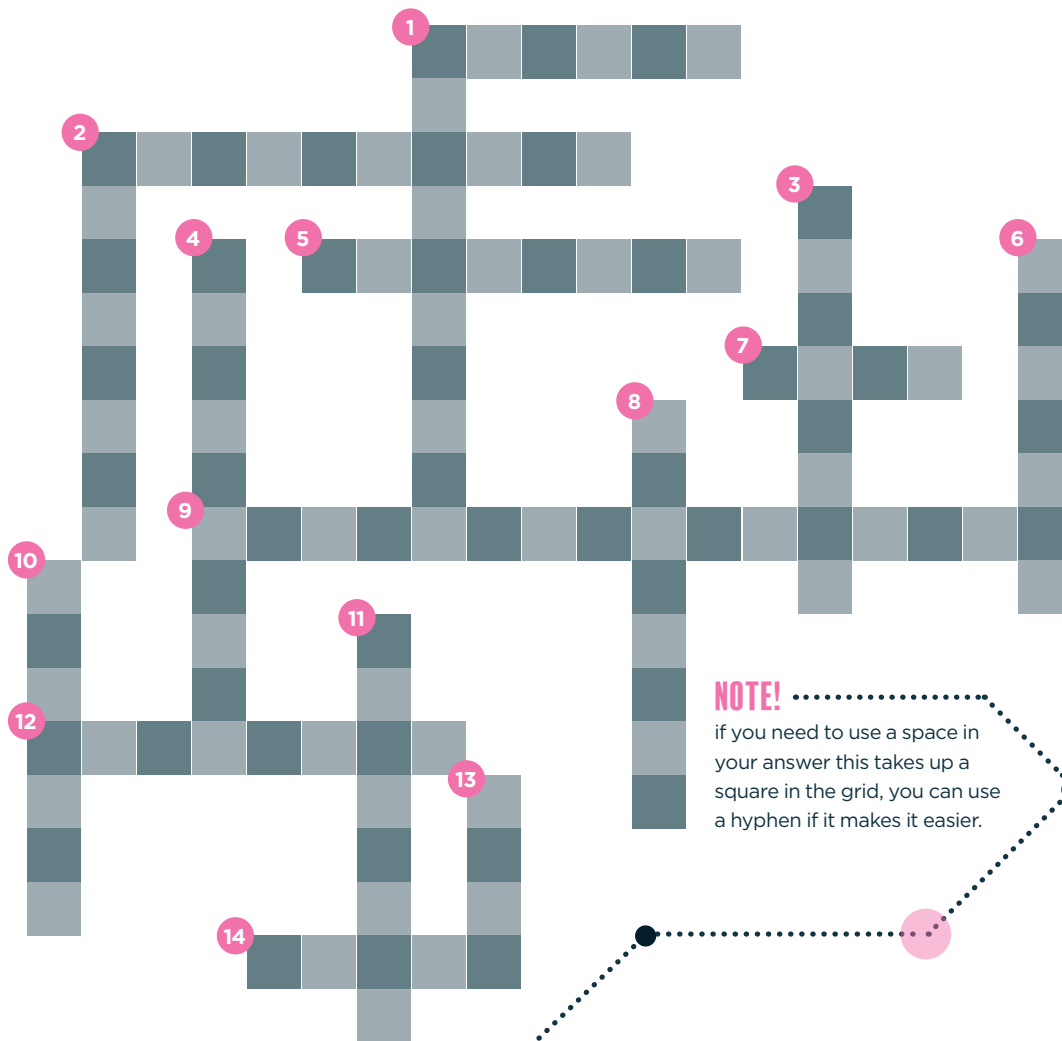
IMPROVING THE TEXT

Use the space below to have a go at rewriting the quote. Use the SHOW, not
TELL / ABC techniques. Expand on the points to demonstrate the value of this
experience. See if you can make it relevant to the course you're interested in
studying. **"I spent two weeks working at a department store. I enjoyed
speaking to customers and helping them with their enquiries."**

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

PERSONAL STATEMENT CROSSWORD

DISCOVER HOW WELL YOU'VE MASTERED
THE PERSONAL STATEMENT. YOU CAN CHECK
YOUR ANSWERS ON THE BACK COVER.



NOTE!

if you need to use a space in
your answer this takes up a
square in the grid, you can use
a hyphen if it makes it easier.

ACROSS

1. What does the C stand for in the **ABC** guide?
2. **Structure** your statement into these to make it easier to read.
5. Approximately **70%** of your personal statement should concentrate on this theme.
7. The maximum number of choices you can make on your **UCAS application**.
9. Who reads your **personal statement** within a university?
12. You should use these to **back up the points** you make in your statement.
14. You are allowed **47** of these in your personal statement.

DOWN

1. You are allowed **4,000** of these in your personal statement
2. Approximately **30%** of your personal statement should concentrate on this theme
3. What does the A stand for in the **ABC** guide?
4. The **UCAS copycatch tool** checks for this (don't do this!)
6. The month of the main **UCAS application deadline**
8. You could use one of these to make initial plans for your **personal statement**
10. What does the B stand for in the **ABC** guide?
11. Ensure you have this correct, alongside **punctuation and grammar**
13. The **organisation** through which you make your university application

SUMMING IT ALL UP

WATCH THE UCAS VIDEO SHOWING
A PERSONAL STATEMENT OVERVIEW:
WWW.GROWS.AC.UK/UCASPS

5 TOP TIPS

1. START EARLY

Don't worry about making it perfect first time, you should write as many drafts as you need. You also need to allow time for a reference to be written by a tutor.

2. MAKE IT PERSONAL

Gather thoughts and feedback from school/college staff, friends and family. But ultimately it is your PERSONAL statement.

3. USE THEMES, NOT SPECIFICS

Remember, the same personal statement applies to all of your course choices. And back up what you're saying using evidence.

4. USE CLEAR PARAGRAPHS

A proper structure helps you organise your work and makes it easier for admissions tutors to read.

5. CHECK YOUR SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR

This needs to be 100% accurate to give the best possible impression of you.

TOP TIP...



USE A SENSIBLE-SOUNDING
EMAIL ADDRESS AND NOT YOUR
SCHOOL OR COLLEGE ONE.

5 THINGS TO AVOID

1. LISTS

You don't have to list everything you've ever done. Pick specific examples that are most relevant and elaborate on these.

2. LYING OR EXAGGERATING

You'll get found out if you have to go for an interview or visit day.

3. GIMMICKS OR UNNECESSARY HUMOUR

Many admissions tutors don't like this. The phrase "Guilty, I confess I want to study law!" is widely shared as an example of what NOT to do.

4. WAFFLE, SLANG AND INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

You haven't got a lot of space so get to the point, but do it using proper English (no text-speak!).

5. PLAGIARISM

Don't copy existing work, UCAS will spot it using its Copycatch tool.



FIND OUT MORE...



+ GROWS BOOKLET

'Your Future, Your Choices'
a guide to all things university
grows.ac.uk/yourfuture

+ GROWS GUIDE TO RESEARCHING THE COURSES AND UNIVERSITIES

request grows.ac.uk/plan

+ GROWS SACU GUIDE TO RESEARCHING COURSES AND CAREERS

request via
grows.ac.uk/sacukit

+ SACU PERSONAL STATEMENT CHECKER

grows.ac.uk/sacu

+ TOP TIPS FOR YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

VIDEO - uni4me.co.uk/activities/writing-your-personal-statement/

+ THE UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement

+ UCAS HUB AND PERSONAL STATEMENT BUILDER

ucas.com/what-are-my-options/create-your-ucas-hub-today

+ WHICH? PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE

which.co.uk/money/university-and-student-finance/getting-into-uni/how-to-write-a-personal-statement-a3bfp7h4yv7s

+ TOP UNIVERSITIES HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT

topuniversities.com/student-info/choosing-university/how-write-ucas-personal-statement

+ STUDENTIAL GUIDE TO WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

studential.com/university/applying/UCAS-application-guide/personal-statements/writing-guide/how-to-write-a-personal-statement

+ CONTACT THE UNIVERSITY YOU WANT TO APPLY TO - ASK THEM IF THEY HAVE ANY POINTERS AND WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN A PERSONAL STATEMENT.

+ CONTACT YOUR TUTOR IN SCHOOL/COLLEGE, THEY ARE HAPPY TO HELP YOU.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS

1. Course
2. Paragraphs
5. Academic
7. Five
9. Admissions-Tutor
12. Examples
14. Lines

DOWN

1. Characters
2. Personal
3. Activity
4. Plagiarism
6. January
8. Mind-map
10. Benefit
11. Spelling
13. UCAS

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