

Applications for College - How to Write a Personal Statement

Your personal statement is a way of explaining your reasons for wanting to study at a particular college, do a type of course, and to demonstrate your ability to complete the course successfully. The application process for college can be very competitive and a strong personal statement is crucial to ensure your chances of success.

There is no single, right way of writing a personal statement. However, below are a few suggestions on what to include (you may want to use some or all the points below to help structure your personal statement). Remember its purpose is always based around selling yourself to the college admissions staff, summarising your skills and experiences and showing how they are relevant to what you are applying for.

Please note: Each college may provide its own guidelines on what to include in your personal statement (this might include a word or page limit, or specific content requirement), but please check with the college/s you are applying to.

Introduction

Here you could outline:

- Who you are and/or where are you currently studying.
- What qualification type (e.g. A levels or vocational) and subject/s you are applying for (e.g. English literature, bricklaying, childcare).
- Your reasons for wanting to study your chosen subjects.
- Your reasons for wanting to study at that college (e.g. what makes that college stand out for you?).

You should demonstrate enthusiasm for your chosen subject/s, course type, college, and show that you have a good understanding of both the subject area(s) and college you are applying to. Failure to personalise your personal statement to a college and course could suggest you are not serious about your post -16 college choices.

Talk about your school subjects

In this section you should discuss your strengths and key skills, relating them to the subject(s) you are applying for. This will demonstrate that you can complete the course/s successfully.

Discuss any position of responsibility you may have had

This might include being a Student Leader, Prefect, Peer Mentor, Reading Ambassador etc.

Talk about work experience including non-GCSE activities in school

This could include what you did for your Year 10 work experience. Do you have a part-time job? Do you volunteer? What skills, knowledge, and experience have you developed from these experiences? How useful are these experiences in relation to your future college studies? You could also include assisting at open evenings, taking part in drama productions, school fundraising events, projects, sports teams, meetings etc.

Talk about extra-curricular activities outside of school

This could include any hobbies or interests (rock climbing, keeping fit, youth club etc.). You could also talk about any additional certificates/awards you have achieved such as Duke of Edinburgh, sports achievements, music awards (e.g. Grade 4 Piano) etc. Also include any charity/fundraising activities you have taken part in or organised outside of school. Don't forget to mention if you are signed up to do the NCS (National Citizen Service) at the end of Year 11.

Write about your plans for the future

In this section you could write about what you would like to do in the future and why; explain how your chosen subject/s can help you achieve this.

Useful sentence starters for writing a personal statement

I am a Year 11 student at School studying GCSEs in.....	My favourite subjects are....	I am currently.....
My strengths are.....	I am proud of.....	I enjoy.....
My greatest achievement(s) is/are....	I plan to.....	I hope to.....
I intend to.....	This year.....	While at school.....
Outside of school.....	Alongside my schoolwork I.....	Last term I.....
Recently.....	During the summer.....	I work hard to.....
To develop my skills in.....	To achieve.....	To improve.....
I find / have foundchallenging/difficult	In addition.....	Furthermore.....

What is a skill?

A skill is something that can be developed or improved through training or practice. This could be in a workplace or education setting.

Skills you can include in your personal statement

Team- work	Verbal / oral communication	Good listener
Organisation	Time management	ICT skills
Planning	Reading	Written communication
Analysing	Presenting	Researching
Problem solving	Leadership	Decision making

What is a quality?

A quality is part of your personality. It often describes the way you interact with others or behave.

Qualities you can include in your personal statement

Adaptability	Flexibility	Proactive approach
Reliability	Caring / friendly	Inquisitive
Patient	Polite	Punctual
Responsible	Dedicated	Confident
Positive	Ambitious	Conscientious
Honest	Hard working / diligent	Helpful
Thoughtful	Proactive	Adventurous

Useful Websites

The following websites provide further information on how to write a personal statement including top tips, do's and don'ts, and example personal statements:

- www.thestudentroom.co.uk/content.php?r=15927-sixth-form-college-entrance-personal-statements
- <https://www.focuspoint.org.uk/s4-6/applying-to-college/your-college-personal-statement/>
- <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/tutorial-writing-personal-statement-ucas-or-college-application>

Example personal statements

Over the next few pages you will find some example personal statements. Use these examples to help you to compose your own personal statement. Consider:

- Is the content clear and informative?
- Is the content free from spelling and/or grammatical errors?
- Do you know what the applicants want to study at college and why? (Reviewing example personal statements can help you to develop your own.)



Example 1

I am interested in joining Anytown Sixth Form College because I want to gain A-levels and maybe apply to university. I have looked at the sixth form prospectus so I know it offers A levels in the subjects I'd like to study.

I have good attendance, punctuality, behaviour, homework and classwork. I am predicted to get good grades in all my GCSE subjects.

I have good communication skills which I developed during work experience. I have skills in teamworking and have strong self-confidence, which I also gained from work experience. During my work experience, I learned more about computers and how they work, more about architecture and using information technology to produce architectural drawings. I have good business, computer and mathematics knowledge, which I hope to gain A-levels in. I am very pleased to be predicted high grades in both information technology and business studies as well as with the A grade in graphics, another subject I hope to study at A-level.

I have recently done my mock GCSEs and I have learned that a lot of preparation must be done for success in these exams. Also, workload in school has been increasing in both classwork and coursework; I have learned that if we do not meet the deadlines then the workload increases even more!

In my spare time, I go out with my friends and play football and cricket. I used to play cricket for a club where I met new people and gained communication skills and increased my self-confidence. I am also a season ticket holder for Bolton Wanderers and I have met new people at the ground and those that work in the ticket office. I like listening to music and playing a lot of sports.

At college I hope to gain A-levels in maths, graphics and business studies. From there I hope to go to university and do a course in architecture, interior design or designing cars. I hope to then work in architecture or for a car company.



Example 2

I am currently a pupil at Anytown School. I am a reliable student. My attendance record at school is good and I always try my best in lessons, even in maths which is a subject I do not enjoy and that I find difficult. I am expecting to get good grades in most of my GCSEs.

I have a strong interest in fashion and design. I keep a scrapbook of my favourite trends and enjoy sketching my own designs. I make some of my own clothes and use my design skills to make alterations to the clothes I buy in shops. I am keen to learn and develop new skills and I think the BTEC course your college offers will suit me as I will be assessed as I go through the course rather than having to sit big exams at the end.



Example 3

I attend Anytown School and I am currently studying a range of GCSEs that include French, geography, IT, English literature and food technology. My favourite subject is English as I enjoy reading, writing, using a wide range of vocabulary and evaluating characters from novels. I have been a member of the school basketball team. I completed my work experience in a shoe shop where I gained various skills including how to deal with difficult customers which will help me in the future.

I want to apply to your college to study A levels in English language, economics, law and history. I would like to become a lawyer and I know that I need A levels to do this and that I must get high grades. I know that there are different areas of law and I am not yet sure what type of lawyer I want to become. I would like to legally represent people and help them with problems they have. My family and friends say I am a pleasant, kind, caring considerate and quiet person. I would describe myself as tolerant, hardworking, polite and friendly.

I want to apply to your college as I know it has a good reputation and that students get good grades in their A levels. I can get to the college quite easily by bus and I think I would also like to join the college basketball team.



Example 4

Sport is my biggest passion and I really want to continue studying this after my GCSEs. I have developed many skills through playing sport and I think this will help me with my studies at college. I am good at all of my subjects and if I work hard, I will get decent grades in my GCSEs, but I only really enjoy the active and practical subjects I study such as PE and photography. As a striker and a captain in my local football team I am able to work well within a team and also perform under pressure. I enjoy helping others to get more skilled and more interested in sport and I do this by coaching younger pupils at my school in both football and swimming.

I want to study the BTEC qualification as this will be best for me and the way I prefer to learn – by doing and showing rather than writing lots of essays and assignments. Because I love sport so much, I think I will do really well and get good grades. I know that many universities will accept BTEC qualifications if I decide to apply. I am also keen to join some of the college sports teams so that I can challenge myself by having the chance to play against harder teams.



Example 5

I am studying at Anytown School for GCSEs. My favourite subject is resistant materials and I think I will pass all my GCSEs.

Recently I won a school prize for showing good effort throughout the year. I like getting involved in after school activities such as swimming and golf and my favourite is swimming. I work hard and try anything that is challenging.

I get extra help with my lessons and I go to after school revision classes to help me. Outside of school I am very active, and I like to play lots of different sports with my brothers or friends. I am not sure exactly what subjects I want to study yet, but I came to a taster day at your college and I really liked it. The teachers were really friendly, and I found out about the courses that you offer. I will have a better idea when I get my results.

College Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

How do you reduce your whole life to a few sentences? Of course, you want to demonstrate that you're friendly and studious, but try also to say something memorable here that really makes you different from other college applicants. Do you make a killer roast dinner? Do you do your best thinking when on a bike ride? Do you read books late at night with a torch?

2. Why are you interested in our college?

Be specific when answering this and show that you've done your research. What specifically about the college distinguishes it from others you are considering? The interviewer is hoping that you are interested in the college for reasons other than peer pressure or convenience. Similarly, if you say you applied entirely because of a parent or teacher's recommendation, you'll be suggesting that you lack initiative and have few thoughts of your own.

3. Who in your life has most influenced you?

There are other variations of this question i.e. Who's your hero? What historical or fictional character would you most like to be like and why? This can be an awkward question if you haven't thought about it, so spend a few minutes considering how you would answer. In this question, the interviewer may want to see if you can think on your feet or think creatively, or even get you to try and reveal more about your character. Therefore, identify a few real, historical, and fictional characters you admire, and be prepared to articulate WHY you admire them.

4. Why do you want to study-----?

It is OK if you have not decided what course/s you want to study when you apply to college - your interviewer will not be disappointed if you say you have several interests and have not yet decided. However, if you have identified a course, be prepared to explain why. Avoid saying that you want to study something because you'll make a lot of money one day - your passion for a subject will make you a good college student, not your love of money.

5. What do you do for fun in your free time?

'Hangin out' and 'chillin' is a weak answer for this question. College life obviously isn't all work, so the college admissions staff want students who will do interesting and productive things even when they aren't studying. Do you write? Fish? Play a sport? Answer a question such as this one to show that you are well-rounded with a variety of interests.

6. What did you do with your time in lockdown?

Everyone will have found their time at home in lockdown challenging, so you can explain why this was and what you did in response to it. Did you take up a new hobby or interest during lockdown?

7. Do your predicted grades accurately reflect your effort and ability?

In the interview or on your application, you often have an opportunity to explain a low grade. Be careful with this issue -- you don't want to come across as someone who blames others for a low grade. However, if you really did have valid reasons, let the college know.

8. What can I tell you about our college?

You can almost guarantee that your interviewer will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions. Make sure you have some, and make sure your questions are thoughtful and specific to the particular college and course.

For the interview

1. Reread your application

Before your interview, reread your college application as the interviewer may ask you a question based on something you wrote in it e.g. *'You mentioned in your application that you coach a junior football team – can you tell me about it?'*

2. Plan your journey

If attending an interview at college think about how you will travel there; look at bus/train timetables and plan your route. Allow plenty of time, as it is always better to be early.

3. Dress to impress

Smart casual is your safest bet, but the main thing is to look neat, clean and tidy.

4. Make a good impression

Be polite. Try to address your interviewer by name. Introduce your parents if they are in the waiting area. Do thank your interviewer at the end of the interview.

Due to Covid-19 guidelines: Do **not** shake hands.

5. Mobile Phones

Switch off your mobile phone before the interview. If you forget and it rings, apologise but don't answer it!

6. Be yourself

Some students may feel they need to exaggerate to impress the interviewer, just be yourself.

Your interviewer wants to get to know you, so practise answering some of the interview questions on the previous page.

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