

Applications for College - How to Write a Personal Statement

Your personal statement is a way of conveying your reasons for wanting to study at a particular college, do a type of course, and to also 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 of the points below to help structure your personal statement).

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 are you and/or where are you currently studying
- ✓ What are you 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 particular college (e.g. what makes that college stand out for you?)

You should demonstrate enthusiasm for your chosen subject/s, course type and college, and show that you have a good understanding of the subject area 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 and relate them to what you are applying for. This will demonstrate that you are capable of accomplishing the course/s successfully.

- **Discuss any position of responsibility you may have had**

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

- **Talk about work experience including non-GCSE activities in school**

This could include what you did do 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 were these experiences? 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. It can 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 Citizenship 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; explaining 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 school work 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 upon through training or practice. This could be in a work place or education setting.

Skills you can include in your personal statement

Team work organisation	Verbal / oral communication	Good listener
Planning	Time management	ICT skills
Analysing	Reading	Written communication
Problem solving	Presenting	Researching
	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

Example 1

I am a charismatic and outgoing individual who can naturally interact with people. During discussions I am able to listen and respond to opinions of other people and put across my opinion as well. I am always reliable and responsible, with every intention of fulfilling my potential in everything I do. I prefer to stay within a close group of friends, however despite this I am able to cooperate and merge with other social groups and easily create connections with my peers. I am also able to speak Bengali which helps in widening my friendship groups to people who are also able to speak Bengali.

Throughout my school years and life outside of school I have had many different interests and hobbies; however I have to say that Badminton is one of my favourite interests. I enjoy the main aspects of badminton and have a real desire to improve my knowledge and skills of the game. In addition, I enjoy watching sports on TV and finding out the latest news headlines of specific sports. These include: Football, Snooker, Boxing etc. In my spare time I volunteer at a local charity shop which helps support children hospices around Cambridge. By volunteering at a charity shop, I am able to understand how important charity is as well as having some experience in a working environment. I feel that all of these interests have shaped me into a better person, and have taught me valuable lessons, such as money handling and communication with others in the community which I can use in everyday situations.

I take great pride in being able to achieve in everything I do, whether it's inside or outside of school. Throughout my years at school, I have been awarded the Year Coordinator Award which means that for that year I have exceeded everyone in terms of levels and behaviour. The following year led me to win the Form Tutor award which means that in a form tutors eyes I have excelled in my form group and set a standard for my younger peers to aim for. Saying this I still wish to build on my experiences and achievements by focusing on what is required of me to succeed in all my courses and activities throughout my life. Furthermore my accomplishments have meant that I can succeed in everything I do, and that dedication leads to achievement.

After leaving school I intend to go to sixth form and continue my further education. The reason for this is because I want to expand my knowledge in the subjects that I want to pursue. In terms of courses, I would have to say that I would be interested in going down the science route, however specialising in Chemistry or Biochemistry. The reason I have chosen to go down this route is because from a young age I have always had an interest Chemistry and have always enjoyed the concept of being able to create consumer goods using Chemistry or medicine to help people. However I am still deciding possible careers in this sector due to the vast options for this subject. If I wish to pursue just Chemistry then I may decide to go into the chemical engineering sector. Despite saying this I still would like to go to university and get a degree in Biochemistry or Chemistry. Even though I enjoy the idea of Chemical engineering, I still can't rule out the idea of going down Biochemistry and helping people and creating medicines, which I can also pursue in University and aim for a degree in Chemistry or Biochemistry.

Example 2

I am interested in joining xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Sixth Form College because I want to gain A-levels and maybe advance into university. I think that by going to the xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx sixth form I will gain these A-levels and advance to university.

I have good attendance, punctuality, behaviour, homework and classwork.

I have good skills in communicating which, I developed during work experience. I also have skills in teamwork and have strong self-confidence, also which I gained from work experience. At work experience I learned more about computers and how they work, also I learned 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 with gaining an A grade in both Information technology and business studies also I am very pleased with the A grade in Graphics, also a subject which I hope to study at A-level.

I have recently done my mock GCSE's and I have learned that a lot of preparation has to be done for success in these exams. I also have to prepare for my mock interview. Also workload in school has been increasing in both class-work and coursework; I have learned that if we do not meet the deadlines then 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 and here I met new people, where I 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 also by needing to communicate with people at the ticket office. I like listening to music and playing a lot of sports. I sometimes help my uncle with decorating and I meet new people and gain more decorating skills

At college I hope to gain three A-levels in maths, physics, 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 an automobile firm.

Example 3

I am a reliable, self-motivated, confident person. I can relate well to both members of staff and students I am co-operative and enthusiastic in many things I do both in and out of school.

My attendance and punctuality have been of a very high standard

In Year 11 was elected to be a Prefect by both pupils and staff, this involves working in groups, co-operating with staff and attending functions both in and out of school hours.

Outside school I get great pleasure from many different sporting activities one of these being skiing, which I have participated in for seven years. I train at the Ashford Ski Village on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings and compete in many professional races throughout the year. This involves racing against the best in the country. I have achieved my 1, 2 and 3 star awards and have been presented with my bronze 'Instructors Award'. I also enjoy trampolining, badminton, dancing, table tennis, listening to music and spending time with my friends.

In year 10 the form tutors were asked to present a Certificate of Achievement, to two students for a specific reason. I was chosen for this award for 'outstanding progress' with my studies.

Something I will always treasure is the memory of all the hard work I have put into taking part in three performances of 'Hairspray'. This involves giving up your spare time to work on an 'act' which you then perform on stage in front of parents, teachers, family and friends. In the end it is an extremely rewarding feeling. For Community Action I went to Parklands Nursery where I worked with young children between 1 and 5 years of age.

My Work Experience placement was at Sheffield University Television Studios. Due to the nature of my placement I decided to present my Work Experience project in audio visual form by creating a video based on the time I spent there. For this reason it has been suggested by my teachers that I should be nominated for a special award from the Governing Board. I thoroughly enjoyed my Work Experience placement and developed an endless number of new skills.

I also arranged to attend a one week Work Experience placement at a solicitors firm called xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx during the six weeks summer holiday. My supervisor, Mr xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx said the following about me: "she was given certain tasks to perform and on each occasion they were carried out with diligence and care. Throughout her stay her dress, manner and behaviour were excellent."

I have not yet decided on a future career so I intend to go on to college to study A Levels. This will give me time to decide on a future career.

College Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question seems easier than it is. How do you reduce your whole life to a few sentences? And it's hard to avoid commonplace answers like "I'm friendly" or "I'm a good student." 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. Did you teach your dog to play the piano? Do you make a killer wild strawberry pie? Do you do your best thinking when on a 100-mile bike ride? Do you read books late at night with a flashlight?

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. 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. Avoid questions like "when is the application deadline?" or "how many subjects do you offer?"

4. Who in your life has most influenced you?

There are other variations of this question: Who's your hero? What historical or fictional character would you most like to be like? This can be an awkward question if you haven't thought about it, so spend a few minutes considering how you would answer. Identify a few real, historical, and fictional characters you admire, and be prepared to articulate WHY you admire them.

5. Why do you want to study?

Realise that you don't need to have decided on a particular course when you apply to college, and 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 greed.

6. 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 admissions folks want students who will do interesting and productive things even when they aren't studying. Do you write? Fish? Play a sport? Use a question such as this one to show that you are well-rounded with a variety of interests.

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 bad grade or a bad year at school. Be careful with this issue -- you don't want to come across as a moaner or as someone who blames others for a low grade. However, if you really did have extenuating circumstances, let the college know.

During the interview, DO NOT...

1. Be Late

Your interviewers are busy people. Interviewers are probably taking time out of their full-time jobs to meet with you, and admissions folks often have back-to-back appointments scheduled. Lateness disrupts schedules and shows irresponsibility on your part.

2. Underdress

Business casual is your safest bet, but the main thing is to look neat and tidy. You'll look like you don't care if you show up wearing ripped jeans or low cut top.

3. Talk Too Little

Your interviewer wants to get to know you. If you answer every question with a "yes," "no," or a grunt, you're not impressing anyone, and you're not demonstrating that you can contribute to the intellectual life of the campus.

4. Chew Gum

It's distracting and annoying.

5. Show Disinterest

This should be a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised what some students will say. A comment like "you're my back-up school" or "I'm here because my parents told me to apply" is an easy way to lose points during the interview.

6. Fail to Research the College

If you ask questions that could easily be answered by the college's website, you'll send the message that you don't care enough about the school to do a little research.

7. Lie

This should be obvious, but some students do get themselves in trouble by fabricating half-truths or exaggerating during the interview.

8. Be Rude

Good manners go a long way. Shake hands. Address your interviewer by name. Say "thank you." Introduce your parents if they are in the waiting area. Say "thank you" again.

9. Mobile Phones

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