



SIDMOUTH COLLEGE

believe | inspire | succeed

**PERSONAL
STATEMENT
GUIDANCE**

PERSONAL STATEMENT HINTS & TIPS

When writing your personal statement, points to note are:

At least half of the statement should be about the subject you are applying for and should explain why you are interested. Demonstrate enthusiasm and provide evidence of your commitment beyond the classroom.

Be wary of providing complete examples of previous personal statements as UCAS submit applications to similarity detection tests, designed to identify work copied from other sources.

Stress the importance of highlighting and expanding on any accomplishments and interests versus just giving information. See below for a 'before' and 'after' example:

Before

I enjoy history lessons so have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. I look forward to examining a range of historical subjects. I am particularly interested in French history and trips to France have broadened my historical perspective.

After

I have always been fascinated by the past beginning with a childhood interest in time travel and mythology. School exchange trips to France and Germany provided me with the opportunity to study 18th century French history and World War I & II in depth.

Important points to remember:

It should be no more than 4000 characters (including spaces) and no more than 47 lines long (this will show automatically on the screen).

It is best to prepare it offline as a word processed document and paste the final version into the form.

Use plain text – no bold, underline, italics or foreign characters, such as á, è, õ
If writing on-line, it must be saved regularly as the site times-out after 35 minutes of inactivity.

Do's and Don'ts:

There is a lot of advice on the internet about how to fill in personal statements but much of it is contradictory. How to complete it and what to include depends to some extent on the course applied for and its academic requirements.

What matters is that you are articulate and choose a style which suits you – it doesn't matter whether you use paragraphs, headings, note form or bullet points.

The personal statement must:

- be free of grammar and spelling mistakes
- be focussed
- convey motivation and enthusiasm
- be at least half directly relevant to the choice of course
- be checked by tutor or subject teacher
- be original work – UCAS submit applications to similarity detection tests, designed to identify work copied from other sources.
- create a list of ideas before attempting to write the real thing

Do:

- expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy
- ask trusted and appropriate people for their feedback
- check university and college prospectuses, websites and entry profiles, as they usually list the criteria and qualities that they want their students to demonstrate
- be enthusiastic – if interest is shown for the course, it may help to gain a place

Don't:

- let spelling and grammatical errors spoil the statement
- feel the need to use elaborate language
- lie – students may get caught out at interview when asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement
- rely on a spellchecker as it will not pick up every error - proof read as many times as possible
- leave it to the last minute – the statement will seem rushed and important information could be left out

What to include:

1. Reason for applying for a particular degree(s) and how this relates to current/ previous studies and experiences such as extra curricular activities and interests (this is particularly important when you are applying for a subject that you have not studied before).
2. Reasons for the choice of subjects taken at A Level or equivalent.
3. What you can offer - evidence of a willingness/desire to learn at a higher level and evidence that you understand what is required to study the course, e.g. if applying for psychology courses, show that you know how scientific the subject is.
4. Details of relevant activities and achievements. Any of the following might be appropriate to include but you should consider carefully and only include those which are relevant. Instead of merely listing these you should demonstrate skills and knowledge gained and note how you will apply this to your future studies:

- employment, work experience and other positions of responsibility
- hobbies, interests and volunteering
- accredited and non-accredited skills and achievement which you have gained through activities, such as Young Enterprise
- any other achievements that you are proud of, e.g. reaching grade three piano or being selected for the county cricket team.

5. Why you want to go to university/college and what contribution you hope to make to the institution.

Further Information:

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/applications/application.php>

<http://www.ucas.ac.uk/website/documents/guides/adviserguide09.pdf>

<http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/startapplication/apply09/personalstatement>

Sample Personal Statement

Example 1:

I have always had an interest in sociology, as I enjoy learning about why people interact and behave in certain ways. I am also interested in why people commit crimes, and what drives them to do so, therefore I have decided a degree in Sociology combined with Criminology would be a good choice for me. Taking an A level in Sociology furthered my knowledge, and gave me an insight into the sociological world. During this course I learnt to interact with new people by participating in surveys in the local town centre, and conducted interviews with elderly people at a care home, both of these I really enjoyed. I also carried out a personal study for my coursework where I organised questionnaires to be sent out and I learnt to analyse data, which was very successful. I am currently studying an Art and Design Foundation Diploma at Exeter College as I have a passion for textiles, however through taking this course I have concluded that my real interest is in sociology.

As well as Sociology, I also have A levels in Religious Studies and Textiles. Religious Studies helped me to develop critical thinking skills as well as essay writing and debating. I studied ethics which included a module of crime and punishment which I found thought provoking, I have also studied sociological approaches to religion, such as the work of Karl Marx. Studying Textiles has widened my creative thinking, whilst developing my imagination which I believe has increased my transferable skills base. During my foundation diploma I am enhancing my further education, whilst experiencing a completely new working environment and meeting new people.

In year 12 I participated in a combined Sociology, Religion and History trip to Amsterdam, where we visited Anne Frank's house, a concentration camp and war memorial fields and museums, as well as some of the local history. Here I learnt to deal with sensitive issues such as war and prejudice. This was a very valuable insight. My family has provided specialised foster care for children since I was 7, this along with having an autistic step brother has allowed me to develop good communication skills and a wide empathy of individual needs.

I have a real skill in textiles and spend much of my spare time sewing, I am currently designing and producing the dames finale costume for my local village pantomime, which I have performed in regularly from an early age. I am very excited about this opportunity. In year 12 I took part in the APAUSE programme where I learnt to teach and lead younger pupils in the role of a teacher. I was also part of the marketing team in the Young Enterprise scheme, where I gained skills such as confidence to sell my product to companies, leadership and taking responsibility. To raise funds for our company we organised a disco for year 7 students, where we had to write and send out letters to parents, supervise the evening, provide food and activities as well as music and manage the ticket money. Also whilst in the sixth form, I took part on two occasions supervising and interacting at the annual Christmas party held for pupils attending a local special needs school.

In year 11 I was made a prefect which gave me a responsibility within the school to participate in lunch time duties, and generally set a good example. I carried this title with me into years 12 and 13. In 2008, I had a part time job as a consultant for the Body Shop at home, this was conducted as my own small business within the company, so I was responsible for orders, bookings and managing money. I learnt to be organised and reliable and work with new people. I currently work part time in our local village shop.

I am a mature, deep thinking student. I have experience of dealing with people which has given me confidence and insight, and I am willing to learn. I have a real passion for the subjects and would relish the opportunity to study them in more depth at university.

Sample Personal Statement

Example 2:

History is probably the most important lesson to learn as it affects everyone and everything. How can we appreciate our lives now, if we cannot appreciate those who made our lives possible? Also, as George Santayana once said, 'those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it'. It is not just the overall events, but the lives of those who have lived; the individuals, their loves and losses, triumphs and misfortunes. A deep curiosity bubbles up inside me at the mention of a mysterious being that I know little about, and once one piece of information is dissolved, the bubbling grows and my thirst builds. History is captivating, absorbing, thrilling, infuriating and upsetting but overall it is life! And this is why I'm applying for History at degree level.

I enjoy reading a range of historical work. For example, I recently read Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', in response to studying the Emancipation of women. Although it was slightly difficult to read, I persevered and read its entirety rather quickly. Her passion for equality was intense and the book had me nodding my head continuously in agreement, especially when she 'demands JUSTICE for one half of the human race'. Her writing was very persuasive, although repetitive, and comparing women to slaves was very effective. It's interesting that she was named the 'mother of feminism' and influenced a whole other generation of women, although they did not like to admit it due to her unconventional life. It certainly helped me to understand in more depth the feminist movement in the late 19th to early 20th Century and helped me to appreciate what women did to get the vote for us!

I was particularly inspired by reading 'Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire' by Amanda Foreman, my favourite biography. Georgiana was such a fascinating woman, and her life was remarkable. The book inspired me to visit Chatsworth House, which was so beautiful and grand, but I see why Georgiana never saw it as hers. My favourite part was reading her original letters and writings which made her seem so much more real and made me slightly emotional. I am currently reading her brilliantly written book; *The Sylph*.

I not only relish historical texts but also fiction. My favourite novels are *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Atonement*, *Gone with the Wind* and the *Twilight Saga*. They are such amazing books, most with historical context, making them more appealing. For example, through *Gone with the Wind*, I was introduced to the American Civil War, while *Pride and Prejudice* explained society in the late 18th Century.

My other subjects, Chemistry and Biology, have taught me many skills which interlink with the study of History. Science has taught me to be analytical in my observations, which is useful in looking at sources in History. Biology, in particular, has helped to improve my presentation skills and to explain my ideas clearly. Studying French last year has enhanced my essay writing, improved my interpretation of foreign texts and elevated my confidence in class discussion. I am also able to present my own opinion, but I have an awareness of other arguments. All of these skills are necessary at degree level.

As well as my academic interests I have a wide range of personal skills and hobbies. Last year I was part of a Young Enterprise group, producing Christmas cards designed by local school children. Young Enterprise helped me to improve my team work and communication skills. It also improved my people skills and showed that I am organised and able to meet deadlines. From being a school prefect and babysitting I have become more responsible and able to organise my time keeping more efficiently. Work experience at a local vets also helped me to work with new people in new situations.

I am so excited about studying History at university and the knowledge, friends and future I will earn. I think that I have the skills, determination and the passion to succeed in my chosen subject and would cherish the opportunity to explore History in more depth. I look forward to the challenge of interpreting new sources and gaining wisdom from historians in specific fields. I think I am suited for this course as I am not just passionate about History, but I enjoy Art and Science as well. After all 'history is as much an art as a science?'

Sample Personal Statement

Example 3:

It has been my aspiration to be a pilot since the age of thirteen and my fascination with the airline industry, especially the pilots sector, has developed since this age. I have developed this fascination through looking at Airbus' and Boeing's websites and carrying out a work experience at my local flight school. This was such a fascinating practical experience and it had a profound effect on me as it completely changed my career aspirations. The airline industry itself is still growing, even through the current financial crisis, and I am determined to be part of the growth of the industry. Flying gives me a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. I wish to share that passion with others and the way to achieve this is through the undergraduate course being offered.

I have always wanted to fly and I feel that this course will help me to achieve this goal. I have visited Flybe, a local airline, to investigate how a modern airline exists and works in today's society. This was an enjoyable experience as it allowed me to gain understanding of the establishment and learn about the skills needed to become a pilot, such as the abilities to listen, work as a team and problem solving, which I believe I have obtained by talking to pilots and staff.

An important skill is the ability to listen. To develop this skill, I became a Sixth Form mentor which allowed me to work closely with a year 7 tutor group. I helped them with problems that were either school related or problems outside of school. As well as listening to students, I also tried to help them achieve academically. As I spent more time with the students it became apparent that some of the students had problems with their reading and spelling which I helped them to improve. These experiences allowed me to work and interact closely with people of all ages and increased my understanding of the needs of different people and their age groups.

I believe that the ability to command a team is incredibly important, especially on an aircraft to enable a pilot to keep control during an accident or emergency situation. I feel I have this skill as I was a member of the Sidmouth Youth Council where we debated issues affecting Sidmouth, allowing me to express my views and listen to others in order to decide on a course of action. Communication skills are vital on an aircraft in order to talk to the cabin crews, the ground crews, air traffic control and the passengers. I have developed this skill by talking to parents at an online safety conference at my school and talking to students in assemblies. Making decisions and solving problems quickly is also important in order to make the situation safer in emergencies and to create a friendlier atmosphere. In order to improve this skill I have taken the position of senior prefect as well as being a member of the school council.

Being a pilot also requires a great deal of responsibility and organisation, the ability to work as part of a team and independently. I am currently the manager of the Sidmouth College Sixth Form website and Virtual Learning Environment which involves a great deal of responsibility, particularly as I work independently and people rely on the website in order to gain information about the college. I also have to meet particular deadlines which have improved my organizational skills. I have also been nominated for Citizen of the Year award by the college staff for being responsible for several events and for volunteering to offer my services to other events in the college, which shows that I have the skill to be responsible in any situation, which a pilot needs to have. I am also a leader in our schools APAUSE program which means that I have to organize my group, the classroom and keep the students focussed on the task at all times which again shows I have the skill of responsibility which every pilot needs.

I believe that I am well suited to this course because I am willing to learn, have the determination and motivation to succeed and have the ability to adapt to new situations. This is supported by the fact that I won the Bradford cup for the most improved student in Sidmouth College. I feel ready to take on a new challenge in an area that excites and enthuses me. I look forward to this course and all the opportunities that it will bring both academically and practically. I am especially looking forward to the 'learning to fly' section of the course where I will be able to obtain a frozen ATPL for commercial flying.



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