

# Expressing your Strengths

## Personal Statements & Job Applications

- **Objectives:**
  - To understand how to express your strengths effectively for university and job applications
  - To understand where the Personal Statement fits in the university application process

# Key Selection Information

- **Employment**

- CV
- Cover letter
- On-line Application Forms
- On-line tests
- Interviews (face-to-face, recorded, Skype, telephone)
- Assessment Centres

- **Universities/Colleges**

- **Academic Record** - GCSE, actual results
- **School Reference and A2 predictions**
- **Personal Statement**
- Additionally, where relevant
  - Requested submitted work (e.g. portfolios)
  - Test results (e.g. BMAT, TSA, LNAT)
  - Performance at interview or audition

# What do Employers and Universities want answered

Why you?

- Why are you right for the job or course?
- What activities have you done that provide evidence for the skills/competencies that they need?

# Selling Yourself

**Difficult!**

- Not used to doing it
- Have to do it in the written word
- Within constraints
  - length, structure, form
  - Vary by type of application



**Imagine you are Usain Bolt and in order to run, you have to write, in 47 lines, or on an application form, why you should be allowed to compete .....**

# Personal Statements

- All going to write one – even if not considering uni
- Process equally relevant and useful to get you to think why YOU for a job
- Watch this presentation from the University of Hertfordshire - one of most comprehensive available

## UH-Personal Statements

- At the end, I will add some further advice in some of key areas covered:
  - Purpose
  - Research
  - Content
  - Presentation
- Outline school's process, support and deadlines

# Additional Tips - Purpose

- **The Paper Interview**
- 5 minutes to make your mark
- Your only chance to “talk” directly to the Admissions Selector so “know your audience”
  - They are academic experts
- Relevant to Results Days as well as initial Offers
  - **“Near Miss” decisions**
  - **Clearing** – make sure you re-read it before you talk to a university about a vacancy
- One chance to show genuine interest, strong academic potential and that you will be an asset
- Only 1 Statement and needs to correspond to courses applied for

# Additional Tips - Research

## Use UNIFROG

- Uni Search Tool/Apprenticeship Search Tool
  - speeds up the research process tailored to your subject and grade profile/business sector interest
- Shortlists provide direct links to uni/company webpages
  - **Course pages/ Job descriptions** - Check what competencies are needed
- Careers Library/Personality/Interests Quizzes
  - Goal Setting task set for 11 May gives ideas of competencies you need for a career
  - **Beware** – how you use when applying to study a degree not actually to do the job
- Build and use bank of ACTIVITIES and COMPETENCIES



# Additional Tips - Content

- **Limited piece of prose**
  - 4,000 characters (**including blanks, punctuation**), 47 lines max
  - Draft in Unifrog, Download in Word (no fancy formatting)
  - Cut and paste into on-line UCAS Apply (no spell or grammar checking)
  - WRITING IT IS AN ART NOT A SCIENCE
- **Uni of Hertfordshire talk about 5 sections - we amalgamate into 3 basic ones**
  - **80% academic/subject**
    - Part 1: Brief Intro and Why YOU want to study the subject  
NB: not what the subject is
    - Part 2: Why they should want YOU to study that subject
  - **20% extra-curricular/personal (at absolute max)**
    - Part 3: Why they should want YOU at their university + closing summary

# Additional Tips – Evidence

- **Make everything count - EVIDENCE**

- Make any experience relevant to studying the course
- Make a point and use an experience/achievement as supporting evidence
- Avoid undigested lists – better to include a short paragraph based on one specific book or piece of “research”
  - Gives some analysis of what you have discovered
  - Says what it made YOU think – not just repeating factual material

- **Show Academic Suitability - REFLECTION and ANALYSIS**

- **ABC** – Action, Benefit, Course

Can also use

- **STARR** - Situation, Task, Action, Result, **REFLECTION**

# STARR – Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflection

- I did some volunteering at a care home. Demonstrating a caring nature is important for a doctor.

Or

- I volunteered at the Bedlow Centre, a respite care home, one day every weekend for 18 months, reading to and helping feed patients. I learnt a lot from talking to them, and also to staff and volunteers when I found things difficult, particularly about the teamwork that is needed across a wide range of roles to provide good quality care.

# ABC – Action, Benefit, Course

- I feel that the extent of my work experience **gave me** a good insight into the world of business.

Or

- Through my extensive business experience, **I have acquired** a good insight into the world of business. I was entrusted with **assisting with** the production of documentation to support a significant sales bid for car parts. Apart from **extending** my spreadsheet and word processing skills, I was able to show the necessary analytical ability and attention to detail required to produce a professional tender. Such skills will be vital in the case studies that form part of the degree.
- **Make it PERSONAL and UNIQUE**
- **Be ACTIVE not PASSIVE in your vocabulary**

## Additional Tips – Evidence

- Post-18 Bulletins
- Uni and Apprenticeship Resource Lists
  - [Exploring Post 18 Options University Virtual Talk Links.pdf](#)
  - [Exploring Post 18 Options APPRENTICESHIPS Virtual Talk Links.pdf](#)
- [University of Hertfordshire Getting Experience during lockdown](#)

## Additional Tips - Honesty

- Be yourself - represent your personality
- Show that you know what you are letting yourself in for
- Be HONEST and don't manufacture or embellish
  - Could get caught out at interview!
- Remember **UCAS plagiarism** detection software

# Reminder – Don'ts

- Poor Grammar and Punctuation
  - Inconsistent use of capitals, e.g. on subjects
  - Punctuation – missing full stops, incorrect apostrophes
  - Do not use don't, I've etc – spell out in full
  - American-spelling - use organisation rather than organization
  - **PROOF READ**

## BEWARE:

- Starting with quotations (especially googled!)
  - Don't demonstrate original thought
- Clichés
  - From a young age/early age I have always been interested in
  - For as long as I can remember I have been interested in ...
- Repetition
- Arrogance
- Being too passive
- Naming a particular university
- Lists of achievements

Less can be more

# Getting Started

- **STEP 1: Complete the School's Planning Framework**

**STUDENT NAME:** .....

**SUBJECT/JOB or INDUSTRY SECTOR:** .....

Record your ideas and thoughts in bullet-points

**Part 1:**

**Why do you want to study this subject OR work in this job/industry sector?**

*Prompts:*

*What do you enjoy about the subject/job?*

*Why is the subject/job important to you?*

*Where does your motivation / inspiration come from (e.g. work, home, a visit, a person, a book, the media)?*

*What are you looking forward to studying/working on the most?*

*Pick out one aspect you would really enjoy and explain why*

*How will studying this subject/doing this job fit into your future career plans? (Though career plan may fit well in concluding sentence)*



# Getting Started

## Part 2:

**What makes you particularly suitable to study this subject/perform this job?**

**a) What COMPETENCIES are required? (knowledge, skills, abilities, experience)**

*Use course and job descriptions to help identify these and list them below. For example:  
e.g. Data assimilation and analysis, logical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking, business acumen, persuasive writing, project management, organisational skills, motivation, determination*

**b) What ACTIVITIES have you done that show/evidence this COMPETENCY/SKILL?**

*What have you gained from:*

- *Coursework/research/other projects?*
- *Work experience/work placements/voluntary/paid work?*
- *Books/newspapers/journals/blogs/radio/TV/ reputable on-line sources*
- *Study placements/ field trips/practical work*
- *Extracurricular **academic** activities –  
tasters/masterclasses/summer schools/academic competitions*

# Getting Started

## Part 3:

**How will you contribute to the course/job and the university/work community, and what makes you an interesting and unique individual?**

**a) What positions of responsibility have you held either in or out of school?  
What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

**b) What COMPETENCIES (skills, knowledge, abilities) have you gained from these ACTIVITIES?  
e.g. leadership, teamwork, communication, aiming high**

**c) Which of these COMPETENCIES make you better equipped to study your chosen subject/job?  
*ONLY USE THOSE WHICH ARE DIRECTLY RELEVANT***

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# Getting Started

- **STEP 1: Complete the School's Planning Framework**
  - Use the prompts to bullet point your thoughts
  - Arrange them in a logical sensible flow
  - Think about required Competencies/Skills
    - Use ACTIVITIES and COMPETENCIES that you have recorded in Unifrog
  - Upload completed framework to your Unifrog Locker so your Tutor can see it
  - Available on-line at:
  - [PS Application Planning Framework EDITABLE](#)
  - [Q:\Other\UCAS & Post 18\UCAS\UCAS Personal Statement Guides](#)

# Getting Started

- **STEP 2:**

## **Produce First Draft of your Personal Statement**

- Use the completed framework
- Prepare in **UNIFROG Personal Statement Tool**
- Pare down your language
- Use **strongest** and **most relevant** EVIDENCE from the examples you listed in your framework
- Strong ending
- Don't panic- most difficult thing is starting
- Won't be perfect and you will redraft and redraft

# Unifrog Personal Statement Tool

- On Home page scroll down to Personal Statement button

- Draft Statement in sections

**UK Personal Statement**

- ✓ Subject added
- ✓ Started
- ✗ Character count
- ✗ Marked as finished

[Go to tool >](#)

**unifrog** [HOME](#) [SHORTLISTS](#) [LOCKER](#) [APPLY](#) [HELP](#) [TEACHER >](#)

[1 Why this subject](#) [2 Your suitability](#) [3 Other interests](#)


### This is your opportunity to shine

The Personal Statement is your opportunity to demonstrate that you would be an excellent student for the courses you are applying to. It is primarily an academic statement and you must target it towards the subject in which you are interested.

Latest version of your statement for studying **Psychology**:

**Write**  
Add, edit and delete text


**Preview**  
How it'll look to universities

**Section 1**  
Why do you want to study this subject?  
25 February 2019

Edit >

The nature vs nurture debate has intrigued me since reading the identical twin case studies of X and Y Smith who, although separated at the age of 6 months and brought up by very different families, when reunited in their 40s showed some remarkably common character traits. This points to a large nature contribution to their psychological development and the underlying importance of their genetic makeup. However, equally there are case studies such as A and B Jones who although identical twins raised in the same family showed extreme variations in aspects of behaviour. Delving deeper into the genetic and societal impacts that shape our thoughts, actions and beliefs through the study of A level Psychology has only heightened this interest. My weekly voluntary work at our local Mencap centre where I see the impact that learning difficulties have on the ability of patrons to carry out day to day tasks and their different responses to these limitations has made me interested in working with people in a therapeutic capacity. A Psychology degree will provide the first step in this career.


1103 of 1200 characters

**Section 2**  
What have you done in the past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject?  
0 of 2400 characters

Start >

- Email to tutor

Email my whole statement to a teacher for feedback:

Price 

+ add a note

Send

Or email it to:

An email address

+ add a note

Email my Personal Statement

Or download it:

As a [PDF Document](#) or [Word Document \(docx\)](#)

- Can download as Word document

# Where do I go for help?

## General advice about personal statements:

- Tutors and the Sixth Form team
- Use resources
  - [Post-18 Booklet 2020.pdf](#) (distributed at post-18 Evening)
  - UCAS, uni websites
  - [Q:\Other\UCAS & Post 18\UCAS\UCAS Personal Statement Guides](#) includes lists of active words and phrases, editable version of framework
- Examples of personal statements
  - <http://purepotential.org/personal-statements> - Read over 250 annotated past personal statements from undergraduates in subjects from architecture to zoology

# Homework

- **Complete Framework and First Draft by  
Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June**
  - Framework upload to Unifrog Locker and email to Tutor
  - Personal Statement completed in Unifrog and email to Tutor
- To be completed by all students
- If you are definitely not going to uni, still complete the exercise but write it for a particular job, career path or industry sector