



Writing your UCAS Personal Statement A UCL Horizons advice sheet

- Do **LOTS of research on the courses** you are applying to, and relate your personal statement to them
- **Word limit:** 4000 characters or 47 lines: this is about 500 words, or about 5 paragraphs (a side of A4).
- **Academic vs extra curricular activities:** UCL recommends that you spend about 75% of the statement discussing your chosen academic subject and a maximum of 25% talking about your additional extra-curricular activities.
- Give it a **strong clear structure:** an engaging introduction, 2 – 3 paragraphs developing and expanding your material, conclusion wrapping it all up and linking back to your subject choice.
- **Aim for excellent, polished writing:** poor punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes will mean the application is rejected. It should flow nicely and be pleasurable to read.
- **Write in your own voice.** Don't try to use long words to show off – read it aloud – does it sound good, does it sound like you? A sense of quiet confidence is the key. No modesty and no arrogance.
- **Avoid it sounding like a shopping list** of books you've read and things you've done. The important thing is that you analyse and reflect on what you learnt from an experience, not that you cram in lots of experiences and name dropping.
- Try to **avoid clichéd / bland statements** that admissions tutors have read 100s of times before: 'I have a thirst for knowledge..' 'Ever since I was a child I've been interested in science ...' 'I'm passionate about...'. Some people say you should avoid fire-related metaphors ("sparked" "ignited" etc)
- **Give evidence and give specific details:** "I'm an outgoing, confident person with excellent communication skills." This is a vague, unproven statement with no evidence. But a **specific** statement about an experience can give evidence that you have these qualities. For example, this statement: "I got through to the finals of the Jack Petchey Speak Out Challenge in Hackney in June 2010, giving an improvised speech on race and immigration issues to an audience of 200 people" provides real evidence of communication skills.
- **Get help. Show your personal statement to as many people as possible;** friends, teachers and family. Ask them what you've left out, what you could have expressed better, and what you've over done. Allow yourself time to redraft and incorporate their suggestions – it won't be much use getting lots of good feedback with one day to the deadline.

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