

UCAS

Personal Statement Workbook

If you're planning to apply for an apprenticeship or job rather than university, write a covering letter instead of a personal statement. You can still use the same techniques - just focus them on the apprenticeship or role you're applying for. Most apprenticeship applications include a section where you'll need to explain why you're a strong candidate, so it's important to present your skills, interests, and ambitions clearly and professionally. Use this ppt and booklet to help you!



FORMAT AND STRUCTURE



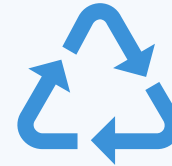
Three sections with question prompts



4,000-total character count split across sections



Minimum character count 350 characters per section



Don't waste characters listing grades and subjects



Don't repeat information across sections



WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS?



Why do you want to study this course or subject?



How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?



What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?



But first...

—

To AI or not to
AI?




Is using AI to help with my personal statement 'cheating'?

Generating (and then copying, pasting and submitting) all or a large part of your personal statement from an AI tool such as ChatGPT, and presenting it as your own words, could be considered cheating by universities and colleges and could affect your chances of an offer.

When you complete your application, you now have to declare that your personal statement hasn't been copied or provided from another source, including artificial intelligence software.

As part of our responsibility to applicants and universities and colleges, the UCAS Verification Team run checks to detect fraudulent applications and patterns of similarity in personal statements.

If UCAS software detects elements of a personal statement that are similar to others, the universities or colleges it is intended for may be notified.



This is taken
from the
UCAS
website.



Spotting an AI-generated personal statement is easy - it sounds bland (hence the photo) and too generic.

AI can be really useful for suggesting examples and ideas (yes, AI has been used for the examples in this PPT...!) but unless you write about YOU and YOUR experiences, it just ends up a dull (and fraudulent) read!

Writing a personal statement
is as easy as...



Activity

Describe a specific activity, experience, or opportunity you've taken part in.

Benefit

Explain what you learned, how you developed, or what you took away from the experience.

Course

Show how it prepares you for university study or an apprenticeship.

Let's start with the last section
first...

Q3: WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE OUTSIDE OF EDUCATION, AND WHY ARE THESE EXPERIENCES USEFUL?

Examples should be **reflective** and **demonstrate** further **suitability** for your subject or course(s), this could include:

Work experience, employment, or volunteering	Personal life experiences or responsibilities	Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:	Achievements outside of school or college
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-person or virtual work experience.• Paid for work or volunteering.• The key thing is reflection on the experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision?• Are there personal experiences that have helped you develop essential qualities for the course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools.• Any activities outside of core studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This could be a position of responsibility for local clubs or groups, competitions, or qualifications you've attained outside of the classroom.

Remember these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



First let's look at employment....



Part-time Job at McDonald's

A: I have been working part-time at McDonald's for over a year, where I've taken on a variety of roles including customer service, food preparation, and working as part of a fast-paced team.

B: This experience has strengthened my time management, communication, and teamwork skills, as well as taught me how to stay calm under pressure and handle responsibility.

C: These skills will be invaluable at university, where balancing deadlines, collaborating with others, and managing independent study all require strong self-discipline and resilience.



Part-time Hospitality Job (for Psychology or Sociology)

A: I work weekends at a busy café, taking orders, managing customer service, and supervising a team.

This is a good point to refer back to my earlier point...All examples are generic and bland! You need to make these PERSONAL to YOU.

B: These insights have made me more curious about human behaviour, which is why I am excited to explore it further through a degree in Psychology.



Part-time Retail Job (for Business or Marketing)

A: I have worked part-time as a retail assistant for the past year, where I've been responsible for customer service, stock management, and handling transactions.

B: This has developed my communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and understanding of consumer behaviour in a real-world setting.

C: These experiences have sparked my interest in Business and Marketing, as I have seen how customer engagement and product placement directly influence sales.

next

Now let's discuss work experience....



✓ **A = Activity (What did you do?)**

- Where did you do your work experience (e.g. law firm, primary school, hospital, engineering company)?
- What were your responsibilities or tasks?
- Did you shadow someone, complete a project, attend meetings, or interact with clients/patients/children?

✓ **B = Benefit (What did you learn or gain?)**

- What skills did you develop (e.g. communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management)?
- Did it give you a better understanding of a career or subject area?
- What did it teach you about your strengths, interests, or personal qualities?

✓ **C = Course (How does it link to your course or future goals?)**

- How has the experience confirmed your interest in the subject you want to study?
- Did it inspire you to learn more or pursue a particular path?
- Which aspects of the placement relate directly to the skills or knowledge needed for your course?



Example with prompts filled in (for a student applying to study Law):

A: During my work experience at a local law firm, I shadowed a solicitor, observed client consultations, and helped organise case files.

B: This helped me to develop my attention to detail and understand how important clear communication is when presenting legal information.

C: It reinforced my interest in studying Law, as I was fascinated by how legal arguments are constructed and the real-world impact they can have on people's lives.

Are you part of a sports team and/or
do D of E?



Football Team Membership

A: I have been a committed member of my local football team for the past three years, training twice a week and competing in weekend matches.

B: Being part of the team has taught me discipline, resilience, and how to work effectively towards shared goals, even under pressure. It has also strengthened my leadership skills, especially when supporting newer team members.

C: These qualities will support me in university life, both academically and socially, as I am used to managing commitments, working collaboratively, and staying motivated over the long term.



Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award

A: I completed the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which involved volunteering at a local charity shop, developing a new physical skill, and completing a two-day expedition with my team.

B: Through this, I developed independence, perseverance, and teamwork, especially during the expedition when we had to navigate unfamiliar routes and solve problems together.

C: These experiences have prepared me well for university, where resilience, self-motivation, and the ability to work with others are essential for success.

If relevant, you could add that you hope to continue this activity at university. This shows sustained interest and suggests you'll contribute to university life outside of your studies.

What do you do for enrichment?



Enrichment

The word "Enrichment" is written in a bold, dark grey sans-serif font. It is surrounded by five solid-colored circles of varying sizes and colors: a large lime green circle above the 'E', a small pink circle above the 'i', a large teal circle above the 't', a large purple circle below the 'E', and a small pink circle below the 't'.

Volunteering in Science Prep Room

A: I volunteer regularly in the science prep room, helping to prepare lessons, organize equipment, and ensure safety.

Say you acted as a teaching assistant, rather than mentioning CASS, as universities won't know what CASS is or stands for!

B: This has given me experience with laboratory equipment and safety, and attention to detail in a lab environment.

C: It has confirmed my enthusiasm for working in a laboratory environment, making me especially excited to study Biomedicine, where I can develop these skills further through practical and research-based modules.



Teaching Assistant

A: I volunteered as a teaching assistant in lower school maths lessons, helping younger students understand key concepts, supporting group activities, and explaining tasks one-on-one.

B: This experience improved my communication and leadership skills, while also deepening my own understanding of maths as I had to explain ideas clearly and confidently.

C: It reinforced my enthusiasm for studying maths at university, as I enjoyed engaging with the material in a new way and seeing how it can inspire others.



Q3: WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE OUTSIDE OF EDUCATION, AND WHY ARE THESE EXPERIENCES USEFUL?

Examples should be **reflective** and **demonstrate** further **suitability** for your subject or course(s), this could include:

Work experience, employment, or volunteering

- In-person or virtual work experience.
- Paid for work or volunteering.
- The key thing is reflection on the experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course(s).

Personal life experiences or responsibilities

- Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision?
- Are there personal experiences that have helped you develop essential qualities for the course?

Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:

- Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools.
- Any activities outside of core studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.

Achievements outside of school or college

- This could be a position of responsibility for local clubs or groups, competitions, or qualifications you've attained outside of the classroom.

Remember these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.

Use the examples from the previous slides to complete section 3 of your booklet 😊

Next section....

Q2: HOW HAVE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND STUDIES HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

Focus on what's most **recent** and **relevant** to your subject or course(s), examples could include:

How your studies or training relate to chosen course(s) or subject area:

- This could be your current or previous studies.
- This could be from any form of formal education – think school, college, training, or short online courses.

What relevant or transferable skills have you got that make you a great candidate:

- Are there a couple of subjects that helped you develop a core set of relevant skills required for your chosen course(s).
- Maybe a particular module or project helped you understand where your interests and strengths lie.

Any relevant educational achievements

- Universities and colleges will see your grades on your application - don't waste space talking about these.
- Focus on your other accomplishments like a competition, holding a position of responsibility or representing the school/college.

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Super-curricular activities ?

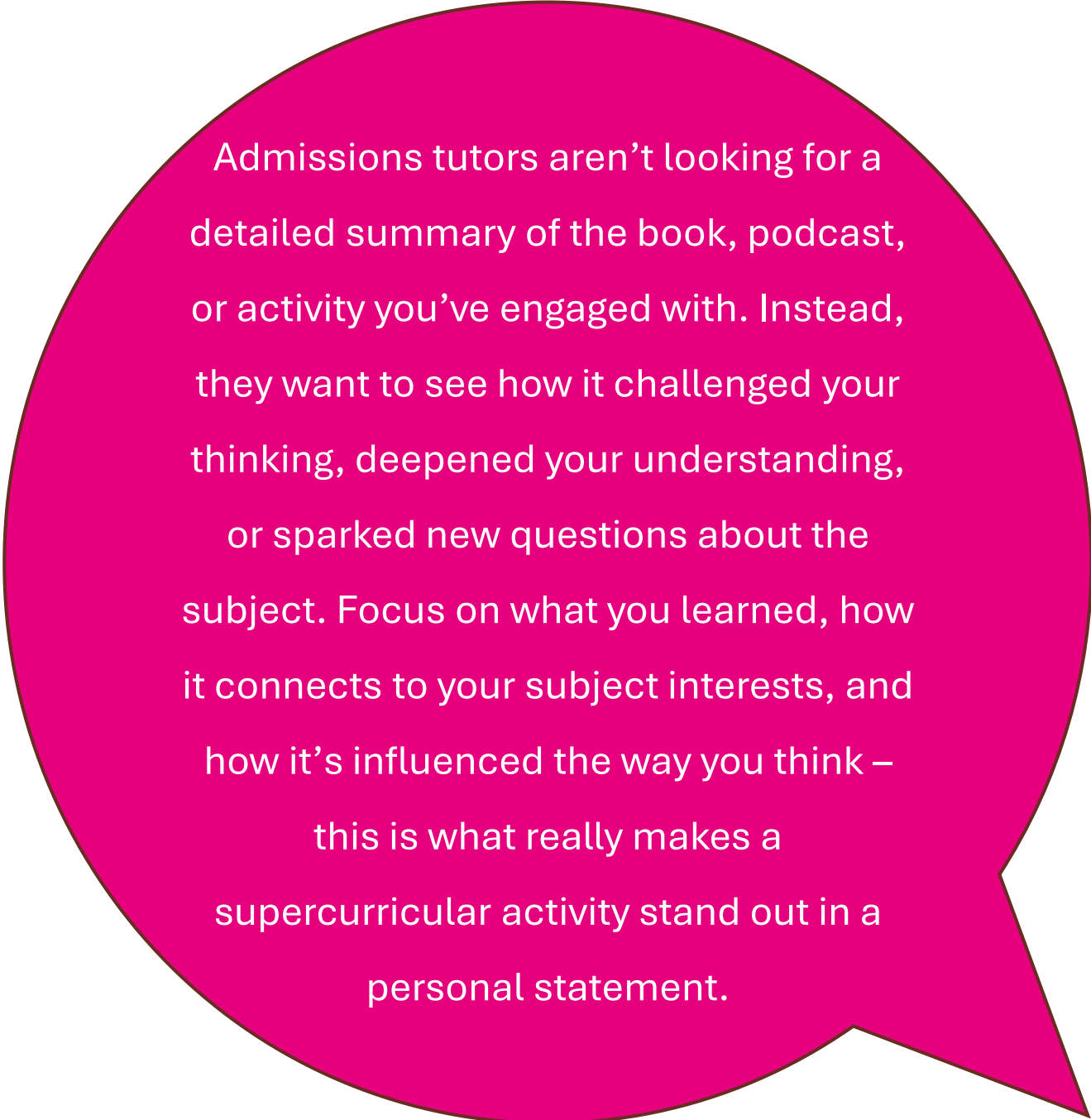
What does “super-curricular” mean?

Super-curricular activities are things you do **outside of your normal lessons** that **deepen your understanding** of the subjects you're studying or want to study in the future. Unlike extracurricular activities (like sports or music), super-curriculars are directly related to academic learning and show that you're genuinely interested in your subject beyond the classroom.

Examples include:

- Reading academic books or articles related to your subject
- Watching university lectures or documentaries
- Listening to subject-specific podcasts
- Completing MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)
- Attending lectures, talks, or taster days
- Writing essays or doing independent research

Universities – especially competitive ones – really value super-curricular activities because they show curiosity, motivation, and a love of learning.



Admissions tutors aren't looking for a detailed summary of the book, podcast, or activity you've engaged with. Instead, they want to see how it challenged your thinking, deepened your understanding, or sparked new questions about the subject. Focus on what you learned, how it connects to your subject interests, and how it's influenced the way you think – this is what really makes a supercurricular activity stand out in a personal statement.

EPQ

A: For my Extended Project Qualification, I investigated the ethical implications of artificial intelligence in healthcare.

B: This allowed me to deepen my understanding of both medical ethics and the technical aspects of AI, while also improving my ability to manage independent research, structure arguments, and critically evaluate sources.

C: These skills and experiences will support my success on a Biomedical Sciences course, particularly in modules involving bioethics, technology in healthcare, and dissertation writing.

EPQ

A: During my EPQ, I explored the psychological impact of social media on adolescent wellbeing, managing every stage of the project independently—from forming a question to analysing findings.

B: This experience boosted my confidence in working without step-by-step guidance and taught me how to structure long-form research, manage my time, and stay motivated.

C: I am keen for the opportunity to conduct further research of my own as part of my degree and to be further equipped with the skills to do so.

EPQ

Extended Project Qualification

Don't forget to use the guidance in the speech bubble on slide 24 to make your writing about your EPQ even more impressive and engaging!

MOOC

A: Completing an online course on “Introduction to Neuroscience” deepened my understanding of the human brain beyond the A-level Psychology syllabus.

B: This gave me insight into university-level content, introduced me to key concepts like neural plasticity and brain imaging, and strengthened my ability to absorb information independently.

C: The experience confirmed my interest in the subject and I am eager to continue learning at a higher level, building both the knowledge and research skills needed for a Psychology degree.



MOOC

A: Completing a MOOC on “English Common Law: Structure and Principles” introduced me to legal reasoning and case interpretation.

B: It helped me develop analytical skills by examining landmark cases and understanding how legal arguments are constructed, while also giving me experience of university-style learning.

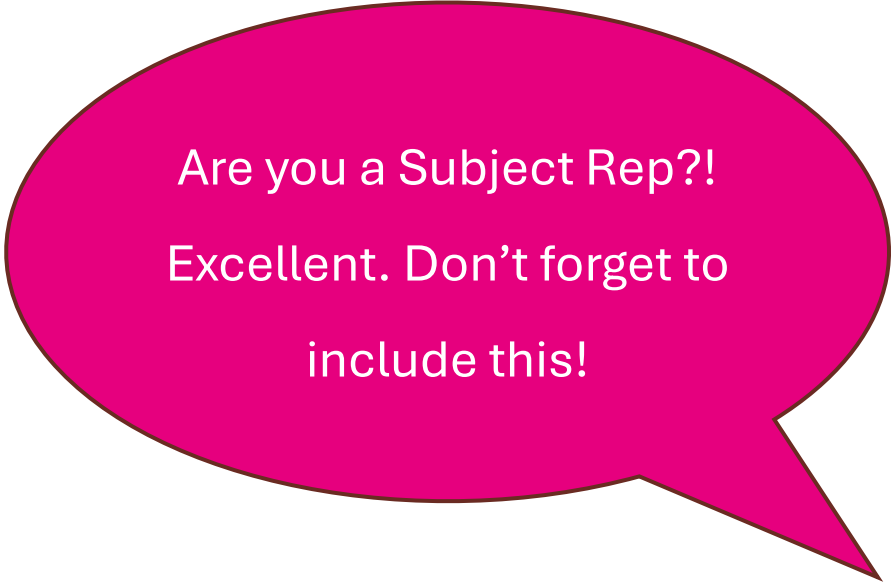
C: This has deepened my interest in studying Law, and I am eager to develop these skills further while conducting my own research as part of a degree programme.

Don't forget to use the guidance in the speech bubble on slide 24 to make your writing about the MOOC even more impressive and engaging!


A: As the elected Subject Representative for the Maths department, I play an active role in Student Voice and represent the subject at school events such as open evenings. This involved speaking confidently to prospective students and their families about the A-level course, answering questions, and sharing my experiences to help them make informed choices.

B: This experience developed my communication and leadership skills, as I had to adapt how I presented information to suit different audiences, while also reflecting on the subject from a wider perspective. I also became more confident in speaking publicly and taking initiative in a formal setting.

C: These skills will support me on my university course, where teamwork, clear communication and the ability to present ideas effectively are crucial for success.



Are you a Subject Rep?!
Excellent. Don't forget to
include this!



Don't forget to say you were
ELECTED as the Subject
Representative – even if you
were the only person to
apply!!

Did you take part in the Chemistry Olympiad or the Senior Maths Challenge?

A: Taking part in the Biology Olympiad challenged me to apply my knowledge beyond the A-level syllabus and tackle unfamiliar biological concepts, including molecular genetics and neurobiology.

B: It pushed me to think more critically and independently, deepened my curiosity about how biological systems function at a molecular level, and gave me confidence in solving complex problems under pressure.

C: This experience reinforced my desire to study Biology at university, where I'm excited to explore the subject in much greater depth and build the foundation for a career in research or biotechnology.

A: Taking part in the Senior Maths Challenge gave me the opportunity to tackle unfamiliar and non-routine problems that required creative and logical thinking beyond the standard A-level syllabus.

B: It helped me develop greater mathematical resilience and sharpened my problem-solving skills — especially in areas like pattern recognition, algebraic reasoning, and spatial awareness — all of which are essential in engineering.

C: This experience confirmed my enthusiasm for applying mathematical thinking to real-world problems, and it's one of the key reasons I want to pursue a degree in engineering.





Time to reflect on each of your academic subjects. Can you identify a topic, theory, or project that helped prepare you for or inspired your choice of degree? How did it spark your interest, deepen your understanding, or develop relevant knowledge for your chosen course?

Use the writing frame on the following slide to help you 😊

Step 1: A = Activity

Describe something specific you studied or did in the subject.

Think about:

- A topic, unit, or module you found especially interesting
- A piece of coursework or a case study
- A theory, concept, or real-world example that stood out

Example sentence starters:

- "While studying [subject], I became particularly interested in..."
- "A unit that really captured my attention was..."
- "I found the topic of [specific topic] especially engaging because..."



Step 2: B = Benefit

Explain what you learned or how it made you think differently. Think about:

- What insight or understanding you gained
- What questions it raised for you
- Any connection you made to real-world issues or future careers

Example sentence starters:

"This helped me understand..." "It made me curious about..." "It gave me insight into how..."



Step 3: C = Course

Link it to the course you're applying for. Think about:

- How this subject experience prepared you for studying the degree
- Why it made you want to learn more in that area
- How it connects to your career interests

Example sentence starters:

"This experience inspired me to study [degree subject] because..." "It confirmed my interest in pursuing..." "I look forward to exploring this further through a degree in..."

Q2: HOW HAVE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND STUDIES HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

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Use the examples from the previous slides to complete section 2 of your booklet 😊

Remember these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.

Last up, the first section....

Q1: WHY DO YOU WANT TO STUDY THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

You'll want to show **evidence** of passion, curiosity and interest, this might include:

Motivations for studying this course(s):

- Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life?
- Is it a subject you love and want to pursue further?
- What is your drive?
- How has your path led you to this course or subject area?

Knowledge of this subject area and interests:

- Is there a particular subject area you've researched?
- Something you can't wait to learn more about?
- What about a book or subject expert doing great things that's sparked your interest?

Future plans; demonstrate why this course/subject is a good fit:

- Do you already have a particular profession in mind?
- How might you use your studies to launch your career?
- What's important to you and your future, and how might the knowledge gained from this course(s) help you achieve this?

Remember these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



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You might realise that something you wrote in Section 2 actually fits better in Section 1! That's OK!

Avoid cliché phrases such as "I've always wanted to..." or "Since I was a child..."

Use the questions above to help you complete section 1 of your booklet 😊

If you have an idea of what you might want to do career wise, it's definitely worth writing about it. Don't worry - universities won't expect you to stick rigidly to any career plans you mention!



Personal Statement Do's & Don'ts

✓ DO:

- **Start with a spark**
Explain *why* you're interested in the course, using a specific moment, subject, or experience that inspired you.
- **Be personal and honest**
Make it clear *why you* are suited to the course. Show your personality.
- **Use the ABC method**
Mention an **Activity**, explain the **Benefit**, and link it to the **Course** you're applying for.
- **Talk about relevant skills and knowledge**
Draw from subjects, experiences, work, volunteering, or projects that relate to your degree.
- **Show progression**
Describe how your interest has grown or developed over time.
- **Keep it focused**
Stick to what supports your application and avoid going off-topic.

⊘ DON'T:

- **Use clichés**
Avoid lines like "*I've always wanted to...*" or "*Since I was a child...*" - they don't say much about *you*.
- **List everything**
Be selective. Pick the most relevant and impressive examples.
- **Copy from the internet**
UCAS has plagiarism checks and personal statements should be *your* voice.
- **Be vague**
Instead of saying "I like helping people," explain when you've done this and what you learned.
- **Just describe the course**
They already know what it is! Focus on why you want to study it.

Over the summer holiday, please write your personal statement or covering letter.

If you're worried you won't have enough content to include, use the break to complete a MOOC, read a relevant book, listen to a podcast, or engage in something else that builds your knowledge and experience.

Your tutor will let you know which format they'd like to receive it in on the first day back in September – for example, attached as a Word document via email, uploaded to Unifrog, or printed out.

Any student who fails to hand in a copy will lose some of their independent study sessions until it is completed.