

WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT

- **4,000** characters including blank spaces *or* 47 lines including blank lines (around 500-600 words)
- A chance to tell universities **why you want to read the subject** of choice, and **why you would be good at it**
- **Two-thirds** subjects based



Credit: Jesus College



Explore your subject at: www.dow.cam.ac.uk

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HOW ARE PERSONAL STATEMENTS USED?

- To confirm appropriateness of chosen subject/course
- To confirm commitment and organisation
- As a starting point for discussion at interview

- To find out about:

- Subject focus
- Reading and other wider exploration of the subject
- Work experience
- Extra-curricular activities/positions of responsibility



Credit: University of Cambridge



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SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL STATEMENTS

1. Give **specific evidence** and **examples** of areas of interest and achievement
2. Show you have thought about and researched the course - **beyond your school curriculum**
3. Are generally at least **two thirds** subject-based
4. Used as an opportunity to clarify your own thoughts about **why** you want to study your chosen subject for 3+ years.

ROUGH STRUCTURE

Opening Paragraph

Explain why you chose that course

Middle two or three paragraphs:

Detailing how your interest in that subject has been developed outside of school (e.g. reading, work experience, attending talks, hobbies, etc)

Closing Paragraph

Any extra-curricular interests and career aspirations

A PERSONAL STATEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE:

Reasons for wanting to study that subject (Career? Enjoyment?)

Enthusiasm for and commitment to their chosen course

Any specific interests within the field (e.g. tutors)

Motivation and suitability for the chosen course (Show you have researched the course)

Academic ability and potential

Outline how you have pursued your interest in the subject in your own time



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SUPER-CURRICULAR



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WHEN INCLUDING SUPER-CURRICULAR

- What did you do?
- Why did you do it?
- What did you learn from that activity?

Example: History student doing their own research

As this year is the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, I wanted to find out more about the Suffragette movement. I watched 'Suffragettes with Lucy Worsley' and the 2018 Richard Dimbleby Lecture given by Jeanette Winterson on women's rights. This made me question whether the militant tactics of the suffragettes really did win women the vote, or whether they even hindered the campaign for women's suffrage. I came to the conclusion - without wanting to downplay the role that the women themselves played - that the suffragettes were transformed from a fringe movement to a widely supported cause because of the actions of the British government.



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WHEN INCLUDING YOUR INTERESTS

- Mention what areas you are interested in within the subject
- Be specific
- What have you done to further this interest?

Example: Natural Science student explaining an area of interest

One of my interests is evolution and genetics: how we can all be made up of the same molecules, the same four bases coded in sequence, but still be so vastly different. Reading "Evolution in Four Dimensions" and "The Vital Question" have made me realise that so much more than genetics creates our differences.



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WHEN INCLUDING EXAMPLES

- Reflect on the **skills** and lessons you have learned not what you have done
- Apply learning to experiences
- Give **specific evidence** and **examples** of areas of interest and achievement. The more related to your subject the better.

Example: Geography student work experience

Through taking part in fieldwork courses, I have been prompted to consider how humans interact with the physical environment. I recently had the opportunity to explore this, in a practical manner, through undertaking conservation work on the Isle of Arran for which I achieved a John Muir Conservation Award. This experience brought home to me the profound influence which we have on the world around us: what we may consider a completely natural landscape has been altered – often in very significant ways – by human activity.



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WHEN INCLUDING READING

- Only include it if you have something **worth** mentioning
- You **don't** have to include **every book** you have read
- Make sure you explain what you **learnt** from the book or article
- It's your personal statement **not** the authors – don't use quotes unless explained
- You must include the **author** when referencing a book and **full title**

Example: Law student speaking about a book she read

Having read "Eve was Framed" by Helena Kennedy, it is apparent that women are not only judged more harshly than men on their crimes, but also on their appearance and sexual history. I have been struck by how scandals such as the gender pay gap and sexual harassment in Hollywood have led to social movements (e.g. MeToo) but few legal repercussions.



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