

Structuring a UCAS personal statement

Please note that this is a basic structure that is a 'safe and secure' way to do a good personal statement. Alternative ways of writing it can be good too!

Opening paragraph:

1. Often the hardest to write. The goal of the opening is to explain what you want to study and explain why you are interesting in studying that subject
2. Make sure it is obvious and explicit what subject you want to study. If you are doing differently named courses at different unis talk to your tutor or Mr. Howarth/Dr. Grossman about how to phrase this
3. Really you need to be answering the question; "I want to study x because" you don't have to write it in that way, but that is the key idea to include
4. You may wish to talk about the journey that has led you to want to study that subject or talk about what first caught your interest and enthusiasm. You don't need too much detail here, but it does need to be personal. Don't say 'Since I was young I have always wanted to...' unless it is actually true as it is a bit of a cliché, but discussing your younger self and how you came to be applying for that subject is common and can work nicely!

Possible ways to start:

I was drawn towards the study of x when...

I want to study x because...

My interest in x began when...

The study of x is an obvious choice for me because ...

X is fascinating to me because ... (where x is the subject you want to study, not your favourite sandwich)

Next paragraph or two:

1. After your opening where you have shown your interest it is important to now show how you are academically suited to the course. You can do this in three main ways :
 - Explain what has interested you in the subject or related subjects at school. E.g. in History I was particular interested by... (make this specific using concrete examples of the things you liked, don't make vague statements)
 - Explain things that you have read or done outside of school that show your academic interest. Books, online courses, lecturers, podcasts, anything that you've done that shows a specific interest. Often especially useful if you can tie what you've

done at school to it by saying, I did x at school and found it interesting because... to further my knowledge I did y and z outside of school

- Explain work experience that you have done that shows your interest. Make sure you explain not just what you did, but what you learned, as this is what makes it worthwhile.
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2. While you are doing this think to yourself all the time 'so what?' Meaning, am I explaining why what I have done or said has developed my knowledge of better prepared me for the course? If not, you need to do this! To explain what I mean, here is an example. Imagine someone is applying for art history and they talk about going to an art gallery in London. This would get them very little credit (maybe a little for having interests, but that is about it.) However, if they then described the paintings they saw, their history, their context, their ideas... that would be impressive and show why that trip to the art gallery was useful for studying art history at university. Think about what you are writing, is it passing the 'so what?' test?

Next paragraph

1. Explain what you have done outside of school that shows your wider skills and abilities. This could be volunteering, paid work, sports that you have played, hobbies and interests that you have.
2. This doesn't need to be super long. Even if you have done loads of great stuff squeezing it into a small paragraph often looks more impressive. It is important that most of your personal statement is about academic things, because you are applying for an academic course.

Final sentence or two

1. Return back to the subject and state exactly why you'd like to do the course and why you would be a good fit. This can be brief, (1-2 lines) but it is good to go back to it at the end

General advice for first drafts:

Just get something written! Give yourself 30 minutes and commit to getting 4 paragraphs on a page, even if you don't like what you're writing. It is much, much easier to start editing from something you have actually written than something you haven't!