Vocational courses require a different approach, writing about work experience may be essential. Look beyond the academic entry requirements and your academic achievements. These are important but you will also need to communicate your understanding of the job role for degrees that train you to become a Doctor, Social Worker, Nurse, Vet, Teacher, Architect etc... Understanding how, for example, a nurse interacts with other NHS workers, patients, health visitors etc. as well as NHS policy issues is integral to that specific job role alongside day to day nursing duties. Imagine a day in the life of that professional. Try and shadow or observe someone in the role if possible.

Writing your Personal Statement

Make every paragraph count! Start by using our planner. Once you have noted down all your skills, activities, achievements and academic interests, you will need to focus on what is most relevant to the application. Your first draft will probably be too long. You can then edit out anything vague or irrelevant. Remember to structure in paragraphs and ask yourself.

Interviews
If you are interviewed, you will need to respond on your statement, e.g. on any academic research or work experience you mention, so be prepared.

Skills, activities, knowledge

Managing your own project
Team work
Creativity
Supporting others
Analyzing data
Problem solving
Managing your time
Planning ahead
Speaking in public
Engaging in extra independent study e.g. MOOC
Leadership skills
IT capabilities
Knowledge and research
Working to deadlines/under pressure
Insight into why you love your subject
Creative process
Critical thinking
Contextualising
Taking the initiative
Working with younger/older people/the public
Sensitivity
Working with animals

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Do:

- Do get straight to the point. A chronological approach can often be too dull. Think about what is most relevant and start there.
- Do relate everything in the statement to your chosen course. This will demonstrate your interest and understanding of the subject.
- Do include extra-curricular projects. Describe any paragraphs to your independent study such as an EPQ, Project or MOOC. Demonstrate what you learnt from your independent personal study and reflect on the methodology and any course related content.
- Do include any career aspirations, or further plans that relate to your choice of course.
- Do talk about your gap year. If you can make it sound positive then get it in. If your gap year wasn’t, say why (e.g. “as part of my gap year in Spain I will work as an intern in Banco Santander to develop my Spanish language skills and understanding of International Management”)
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- Do include any career aspirations, or further plans that relate to your choice of course.
- Do relate everything in the statement to your chosen course.
- Do do some further reading. This should be outside your current curriculum. Explore additional books or journals. If you are writing a personal statement focused on the positive at all times. But try to keep your statement focused on the positive at all times.
- Don’t do any negative. It is not that unusual to switch A levels, or even struggle academically. But try to keep your statement focused on the positive at all times.
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- Don’t make jokes. They will probably fall flat as humour is so personal.
- Don’t have all the answers. Questions on your mind can help us see how you think, even if you don’t have an answer. “Can computer hardware ever be ethical in a question that intrigues me. It encapsulates the fascinating roles that have developed in response to rapid technological and digital change…”
- Don’t list qualifications that you are taking. They are already on the UCAS form.
- Don’t forget to think about the character limit. It may not be the same on UCAS apply online so as on your draft document.
- Don’t be shy. Let others read your draft to check it for errors when you have reworked it several times. Be open to suggestions, you may change the whole structure around as another reader may identify a gem hidden away towards the end of your statement that actually works as a strong opening.

Don’t:

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