

Persuasive academic applications

Tell your partner about an application that you might need to really make, preferably an academic one, for example an application for:

- an academic job (e.g. teaching assistant or research assistant)
- a non-academic job
- a post-doc
- a postgraduate course
- some funding
- a scholarship
- a visa
- membership of something, e.g. of a professional organisation or committee
- an event, for example to attend a round table debate or workshop, or to give a presentation at a conference
- study abroad
- a volunteer position

or something similar like information accompanying something that you want to publish.

For the most likely of the situations you discussed, brainstorm the kind of information that the person reading your application will need in order to choose who is most suitable, then rank those things (including a top ten in order if you can).

Add things from under the fold below that you think should be in the top ten.

-----fold, cover or cut-----

- Aims/ Ambitions/ Plans
- Attending events such as conferences
- Challenges you have faced/ Overcoming difficulties
- Contacts/ Size and importance of academic network
- How prestigious journals etc that you have published in are
- How prestigious your (present, past or future) university, department or course are
- Influence on your field or the world (being quoted, etc)
- Language skills
- Overseas experience/ Overseas travel
- Paid work/ Things you have learnt through your paid work
- Positive feedback you have received on your research/ publications/ studies/ work
- Publications
- Qualifications (BA, postgraduate qualifications, language qualifications, etc)
- Reasons for choosing your research topic
- Skills you have learnt during your studies
- Teaching experience
- The importance of your research/ research topic
- The practical implications of your research/ research topic
- Your attitude/ character
- Your experience of things that you'll need to do during the thing that you're applying for
- Academic skills
- Being selected for things
- Other awards/ achievements (prizes at school, etc)

What examples can you give of the important ones, e.g. academic skills?

Rank the academic skills below, starting by discussing the most and least important:

- adapting ideas from other fields
- analysing data (statistical analysis etc)
- asking the right questions
- bearing your audience in mind/ pitching things at the right level
- being able to research in different ways (qualitative and quantitative, original methods)
- being able to understand/ cope with foreign language lectures, conferences, etc
- being objective
- collaborating in foreign languages
- collaborating online
- collaborating with other departments and institutions
- collecting evidence (interviewing, designing questionnaires, etc)
- critical reading
- dealing with authorities (getting funding, getting permission, etc)
- dealing with large amounts of information/ reading/ sources
- debating
- editing/ proofreading
- finding original sources/ rediscovering forgotten sources
- finding practical implications
- getting other people involved
- giving evidence/ supporting your arguments
- giving feedback
- giving presentations (including poster presentations)/ lecturing
- group work/ teamwork (group presentations, etc)
- interpreting (well-known) research, data or theories in new ways
- keeping up to date with the latest research, technology, etc
- making a name for yourself/ publicising your research
- mastering complex ideas/ explaining complex ideas
- negotiating
- networking/ making new contacts
- organising events
- problem solving
- producing influential research/ publications
- producing quotable research/ publications
- reacting well to feedback
- reading a lot in a short time/ using a wide range of sources
- structuring your arguments
- summarising
- time management
- translation
- using academic language
- using different kinds of evidence
- using foreign language sources
- using language precisely/ using jargon correctly
- using sources
- using technology
- using your personal experience

What evidence can you give for the most important things?

*What aspects of your personality/ attitudes might you want to show in your application?
What evidence could you give to prove them?*

Choose important personality words below and give evidence for them. Your partner will say whether they think that is important and whether they would be convinced by your evidence. Note that words divided by a slash are similar but not exactly the same, so choose one each time.

Useful language for talking about your personality

“By... I was able to contribute to...”
“Due to... I was able to...”
“I found my adaptability to be useful when...”
“I have proved...”
“I have used my ability to... by...”
“I think... shows...”
“I was awarded... for...”
“I was named...”
“My experience of... has allowed me to develop...”
“My knowledge of... helped me to adapt to...”
“People have described me as...”
“Using..., I accomplished...”

adaptable/ flexible
ambitious
broad minded/ open-minded
caring/ sympathetic
creative/ original
curious
dependable/ reliable/ responsible
determined/ resilient
diligent/ hard working
dynamic
efficient
energetic
independent/ self-sufficient/ proactive
innovative
leadership qualities
logical/ systematic
mature
motivated
organized
quick learner
sociable
well-rounded

Complete one of these phrases and your partner will tell you what aspect(s) of your personality and/ or attitudes they think that sentence can be used to prove.

“After finishing the course,...”
“I (eventually) overcame...”
“I collaborated with...”
“I contributed to...”
“I enjoy...”
“I had problems with... but...”
“I have a qualification in...”
“I have a strong interest in...”
“I have experienced...”
“I have mastered...”
“I helped...”
“I learnt how to... by...”
“I like the challenge of...”
“I was awarded...”
“I was named...”
“I won...”
“I’m eager to...”
“I’m fascinated by...”
“I’m looking forward to the challenge of...”
“I’m keen on...”
“In the short/ long term,...”
“my ultimate aim/ goal”
“I’m well known for...”
“My (eventual/ main) aim/ goal is...”
“Unlike most people,...”

How can you make sure that the person reading your application notices the most important information?

How can you assure the same thing with these kinds of applications:

- cover letter
- CV
- online CV (e.g. on LinkedIn.com)
- application essay (= personal statement)

What process did you use/ should you use when writing an academic application?

Would you use brainstorming and ranking stages similar to those you did above? If so, what would you do before and after those stages? If not, what would you do instead?