



## University Applications Tips and Useful Phrases

*Cross off the tips below which are definitely bad ideas, leaving any which you think are good or are possibly good (depending on the situation etc).*

### Content

- 1 Get as much information about yourself into the essay as you can, starting with a detailed biography.
- 2 Only mention things which are relevant to your application, i.e. could be used by someone to decide that you are the right person for a place on the course.
- 3 It's okay if most of the information in your application essay or email is the same as in your CV or application form.
- 4 Put in lots of positive words about yourself.
- 5 *Include positive things about yourself, giving evidence for each thing.*
- 6 *Also use positive words to describe experiences.*
- 7 *Include some negative things, showing something positive about them such as how you got over them.*
- 8 *Say why you particularly want to study at that university.*
- 9 *Say why you want to study that subject in particular.*
- 10 *Make it clear that you understand the demands of the course/ what you will be required to do during the course, explaining why you are sure you will be able to cope and benefit from it.*
- 11 *Mention people, books, ideas, etc which have influenced you.*
- 12 *Mention the future.*
- 13 *If you want to mention things or concepts that don't exist in English, put the word or expression in italics or quotation marks and then explain it.*
- 14 Imagine what questions someone reading the essay might have, and then try and answer them.

### Language and organisation

- 15 Use as many long, complex words and sentences as you can.
- 16 Divide your writing into paragraphs, with a (at least slightly) different topic in each paragraph.
- 17 Include an introduction and conclusion.
- 18 Try to avoid clichés.
- 19 Spend a lot of time on making sure your essay is original, stylish, easy to read and amusing.
- 20 Add lots of linking expressions like "On the other hand" and "Moreover"

### Process

- 21 Only look at other people's essays when you have written at least the first draft of your own.
- 22 Leave your essay for about a week after writing it and then go back and check it with a fresh eye.
- 23 After you have polished it up and edited it as much as you can, pay for a native English-speaking proofreader.
- 24 It's better to go beyond the word or character limit than to miss something important.
- 25 Cut the essay down until you get down to exactly the right number of words or characters.

*Brainstorm useful phrases for doing the things in italics above.*

### **Suggested answers**

**Bold = not a good idea**

#### **Content**

- 1 **Get as much information about yourself into the essay as you can, starting with a detailed biography.**
- 2 Only mention things which are relevant to your application, i.e. could be used by someone to decide that you are the right person for a place on the course.
- 3 **It's okay if most of the information in your application essay or email is the same as in your CV or application form.**
- 4 **Put in lots of positive words about yourself.**
- 5 *Include positive things about yourself, giving evidence for each thing. – “I have proved...”, “People have described me as...”, “I was named...”, “I think... shows...”, “I was awarded... for...”, “Due to... I was able to...”, “My knowledge of... helped me to adapt to...”, “My experience of... has allowed me to develop...”, “I have used my ability to... to...”, “Using..., I accomplished...”, “I found my adaptability to be useful when...”, “By... I was able to contribute to...”, “ambitious”, “creative”/ “original”, “curious”, “diligent”/ “hard working”, “efficient”, “energetic”, “adaptable”/ “flexible”, “independent”/ “self-sufficient”/ “proactive”, “logical”/ “systematic”, “dynamic”, “innovative”, “mature”, “broad minded”/ “open-minded”, “organized”, “proactive”, “dependable”/ “reliable”/ “responsible”, “determined”/ “resilient”, “sociable”, “caring”/ “sympathetic”, “well-rounded”, “motivated”, “teamwork”, “leadership qualities*
- 6 *Also use positive words to describe experiences. – “I found... to be very rewarding”, “I gained a lot from...”, “... was a life-changing/ life-affirming/ inspiring/ rewarding/ invaluable/ eye opening experience”, “... (really) broadened my horizons”*
- 7 *Include some negative things, showing something positive about them such as how you got over them. – “I (eventually) overcame this by...”, “In the end I learnt that...”, “With the help of...”, “Although it took some time,...”, “Initially/ To start with/ At first..., but (eventually/ in the end)...”, “... although I wouldn't realise it until many years later”, “a blessing in disguise”, “I thought I'd missed the opportunity to..., but...”, “By approaching the problem in a... way, I was able to...”, “I didn't know how to react to... but...”, “I really struggled with...”, “I wish that I could have..., but...”, “... made me question my assumptions”, “The hardest thing about... was...”*
- 8 *Say why you particularly want to study at that university. – “... is well-known for... and I...”, “According to..., your institution... and I...”*
- 9 *Say why you want to study that subject in particular. – “I was inspired to study... by...”, “The perfect course for me would... and I believe I can find this...”, “This program would be the best way to...”, “... is exactly what I'm looking for because...”, “I have been looking for a class where I can...”, “I'm particularly keen on extending my knowledge of... by...”, “a perfect opportunity to...”*
- 10 *Make it clear that you understand the demands of the course/ what you will be required to do during the course, explaining why you are sure you will be able to cope and benefit from it. – “I'm eager to tackle...”, “I'm looking forward to the challenge of...”, “Although the course..., I'm sure I...”, “I'm not daunted by the prospect of...”*



*because...”, “an exciting challenge”, “I’m determined to...” Mention people, books, ideas, etc which have influenced you. – “I was inspired by... to...”, “After reading/ hearing/ meeting...,...”, “Ever since (first) reading/ hearing/ meeting...,...”, “... convinced me that...”, “I have been fascinated with... since...”, “My interest in... started when...”, “... has been a great influence on me, particularly...”, “I have developed a strong interest in (the area of) ... due to...”, “my mentor...”, “my role model...”, “... taught me...”, “I learned... from...”, “I first gained my passion for...”, “It was then that I appreciated...”, “It was this that taught me to appreciate...”*

- 11 *Mention the future. – “My ambition is to...”, “After finishing the course, I am planning to...”, “The course will help me... in the future”, “in the short/ long term,...”, “my ultimate aim/ goal”*
- 12 *If you want to mention things or concepts that don’t exist in English, put the word or expression in italics or quotation marks and then explain it. – “There is a word in Japanese..., which means/ could be defined as/ is similar to...”*
- 13 *Imagine what questions someone reading the essay might have, and then try and answer them.*

### **Language and organisation**

- 14 **Use as many long, complex words and sentences as you can.**
- 15 **Divide your writing into paragraphs, with a (at least slightly) different topic in each paragraph.**
- 16 **Include an introduction and conclusion.**
- 17 **Try to avoid clichés.**
- 18 **Spend a lot of time on making sure your essay is original, stylish, easy to read and amusing.**
- 19 **Add lots of linking expressions like “On the other hand” and “Moreover”**

### **Process**

- 20 **Only look at other people’s essays when you have written at least the first draft of your own.**
- 21 **Leave your essay for about a week after writing it and then go back and check it with a fresh eye.**
- 22 **After you have polished it up and edited it as much as you can, pay for a native English-speaking proofreader.**
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*Choose the most useful words and phrases above for you.*

*Which positive things are most important to show or use?*

*Try to think of evidence for positive words that you could use in your application.*