The stages of writing a university personal statement

What stages can you divide writing your personal statement into? Compare your ideas with the list below.

Read examples and advice online (preferably things that are specific to the country, institution and/ or course that you are interested in) and see if you can include any of that in your piece.

Edit out any sentences or paragraphs which don't add anything to your application (e.g. irrelevant details).

Narrow the choices down by thinking which things would be relevant to your application.

Think about how you will link together the various things that you want to include, and write down a paragraph structure (e.g. paragraph one: mini biography, paragraph two: reasons why I want to study that course).

Read the information from the university very carefully to check what they ask you to include in a personal statement and the word limit.

Brainstorm the kinds of things that you could include (e.g. reasons you want to study that subject, personality, achievements, and hobbies).

Brainstorm specific examples of those things that you could include (e.g. personality adjectives that could describe you).

Write your first draft.

Read through and see if the paragraph structure works, whether the essay gives an accurate idea of who you are, and whether you would give yourself a place on the course if you read that. Rewrite it if any of those things aren't true. .

Edit it for grammar, spelling, punctuation and use of vocabulary (e.g. collocations).

Ask someone else to look at it.

Final rewrite and/ or edit, maybe using lists of typical mistakes such as common spelling mistakes to help you.

Leave it for at least two or three days.

Edit it again.

Are any of the stages above unnecessary? Can you add any others to the list?

Try to put the stages into order, then check with the suggested answers on the next page.

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Suggested answers

- Read the information from the university very carefully to check what they ask you to include in a personal statement and the word limit.
- Brainstorm the kinds of things that you could include (e.g. reasons you want to study that subject, personality, achievements, and hobbies).
- Brainstorm specific examples of those things that you could include (e.g. personality adjectives that could describe you).
- Narrow the choices down by thinking which things would be relevant to your application.
- Think about how you will link together the various things that you want to include, and write down a paragraph structure (e.g. paragraph one: mini biography, paragraph two: reasons why I want to study that course).
- Write your first draft.
- Read through and see if the paragraph structure works, whether the essay gives an accurate idea of who you are, and whether you would give yourself a place on the course if you read that. Rewrite it if any of those things aren't true. .
- Edit out any sentences or paragraphs which don't add anything to your application (e.g. irrelevant details).
- Edit it for grammar, spelling, punctuation and use of vocabulary (e.g. collocations).
- Leave it for at least two or three days.
- Edit it again.
- Read examples and advice online (preferably things that are specific to the country, institution and/ or course that you are interested in) and see if you can include any of that in your piece.
- Ask someone else to look at it.
- Final rewrite and/ or edit, maybe using lists of typical mistakes such as common spelling mistakes to help you.

Things to think about and/ or discuss
- Do you disagree with any of the points above, e.g. when you should look for advice online?
- How long do you think each stage will take?
- Is it worth you writing down a deadline for finishing each stage?