

Personal Statement for Application Forms

Most application forms will include a section called 'Personal Statement'. This usually doesn't have headings or prompts and can seem quite daunting to complete. However, it's vital to use this opportunity to highlight how your skills and experience match the requirements of the job. You need to sell yourself to the employer!

Before you start, ensure that you have the following information in front of you:

- Job Description
- Person Specification (if available)
- Application Form
- Your CV

You will be able to refer to these while writing in order to include as much detail as possible.

Remember, don't simply repeat information you have given elsewhere in the application form.

Although personal statements differ, it is generally the case that they follow a particular format. They should have an introduction, followed by detailed supporting information and end with a clear conclusion.

Introduction: You should begin with a strong opening that clearly demonstrates your suitability of the post and your reason for applying. You need to immediately gain the employer's attention and interest. Remember to connect your experience and skills to the post that you're applying for. Whichever way you structure your introduction, you should always mention the post that you are applying for in the first paragraph.

Supporting information: Subsequent paragraphs should refer to roles you have held which demonstrate your relevant experience, skills and abilities. Try not to have one paragraph which has a number of different messages. Break this section into a number of smaller paragraphs with each focusing on an individual key message that highlights your suitability for the job. You can use the person specification (if there is one) as a guide – covering as much of the essential and desirable criteria as possible. Remember if you do include examples to show previous experience and ability, they must be relevant to the post you are applying for.

Conclusion: Link together the various issues you have raised in your statement and once again stress your enthusiasm of the post. You might also want to mention how this role would fit in with your long-term career development goals.

To complete the Personal Statement successfully, always read the notes at the top of the section carefully and refer to them as you draft your profile.

For example: 'Please provide details of your experience including any unpaid work or outside interests which are relevant to the job. Give examples where appropriate.'

Always provide specific examples that demonstrate your ability and/or aptitude to undertake the duties of the post. If you simply detail your qualifications with no mention of what attracted you to the role, you will probably not be successful. You must emphasize the skills you have developed from previous work roles, provide evidence of past achievements and list competencies that you've developed.

The “I” issue: This is a personal statement so using the ‘first person’ is not only acceptable but recommended. Using the word ‘I’ tends to give your content more impact and personalises it. However, although you and your experience are the focus of this statement try to avoid starting every sentence with ‘I’.

Avoid Unnecessary Duplication: It is easy to fall into the trap of repeating information in this section that is already included in another part of the application form. If you've already detailed qualifications in another section of the application form you do not want to repeat this information in the same format in the Personal Statement section. For example, you have given details of an SVQ Level II in Social Care and an HNC in Social Care in another section of the application form. In the Personal Statement section you may wish to simply say that you ‘have both vocational and academic qualifications in Social Care’.

Make your statement distinctive: Try to make your personal statement unique or distinctive as a way of making your application stand out. One way to do this is to describe an achievement or provide evidence of how you have used or developed skills and competencies. Try to link these to a specific situation/ scenario. Ensure that the examples you give are related to the requirements of the post. This will make your statement distinctive and memorable.

Keep it brief, clear and concise: Some personal statements will have a word limit so make sure you do not go over this. Keep the information concise while providing enough relevant detail. Make sure that each paragraph is focused on a single topic. You may want to include paragraphs on topics such as vocational, academic or professional qualifications that relate to the post, or highlight your key achievements and abilities.

Reviewing your statement: Given the importance that employers place on this section, it is vital that you allow yourself adequate time to review your statement thoroughly.

Spelling and grammar: While spelling and grammar checks are helpful during revision, don't rely on them. You must read the draft thoroughly and if possible get someone else to read it.

Before you send it off check the following:

- Did you answer the question?
- Is there enough detail?
- Is the writing clear and concise
- Is the spelling and punctuation correct?