

Creating a strong first impression

Writing a personal statement

A personal statement is a brief statement of the type of person you are, your skills and your achievements. It always comes near the top of the CV, before the main body, and presents the facts in the most positive way. A well-written personal statement will immediately capture the attention of the employer and make them want to find out more about you.

3 a Read Silvia's personal statement from her skills-based CV and find words and phrases which demonstrate the following points.

1 education 3 knowledge 5 success
2 character 4 experience

Well-organised, highly motivated communications strategy adviser. Geography graduate with recent professional experience developing communication strategy for positive change. Currently completing Master's in Development Studies with specific focus on sustainability. Fluent spoken and written English. Self-motivated, resourceful and able to motivate others, with excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

b Each sentence in Silvia's personal statement has a different main function.

Write the sentences next to the questions that they answer (a–e).

a What sort of person am I? Self-motivated, resourceful and able to motivate others, with excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
b What is my area of professional expertise? _____
c What is my most important qualification? _____
d What is my most relevant skill for the job? _____
e What am I doing at the moment? _____

c Complete the following personal statements using the phrases in the box.

confidently and effectively experience in
full-time professional proven ability well-organised

1 Professional, _____ individual. Communicates _____ at all levels; demonstrates initiative and confidentiality both independently and within a team environment.

2 Enthusiastic PA with three years' _____ experience. Excellent written and oral communication skills have enabled me to establish a strong network of professional contacts in your area. _____ to meet deadlines and prioritise whilst maintaining consistently high standards. Substantial _____ organising meetings and conferences gained whilst providing PA and secretarial service to main board director.

d In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1 How do these statements compare with Silvia's
2 Which of the questions in Exercise 3b does each statement answer?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

e The personal statements in Exercise 3c were taken from CVs written in response to the following job advertisement. Read the advertisement and decide which personal statement you think is more appropriate.

f Find an advertisement for a job you would like to apply for. Make a list of the key points that the employer is looking for. Plan your personal statement with those key points in mind. Think about the following questions.

- How long will your personal statement be?
- How many sentences do you want to include?
- What key questions will you address with each sentence?
- What additional information will you include?
- In what order will you put your sentences?

g You can create impressive sentences for your personal statement by choosing a word or phrase from each column in the following table. For example, *Highly experienced accounts manager with excellent communication skills*. Complete the table using the words in the box. In pairs, try and add more words and phrases to each column.

ability to interest in	broad motivator	consistently high professional	enthusiastic team leader		
Extremely Highly	creative	accounts manager			...
	customer-oriented	English speaker			communication skills
	experienced	recent graduate	with	deep	experience in ...
	resourceful	sales professional		excellent	...
	results-focused	self-starter		extensive	knowledge of ...
				proven	range of transferable skills
				recent	skills in ...

h Use the table to write five true sentences about you.

i Use your answers in Exercises 3f and 3h to write your personal statement.

Writing eye-catching headings

4 a Imagine you only had 20 seconds to look at Silvia's CV on page 21. What would you look at? What would your impression of Silvia be?

b In her skills-based CV, Silvia used personal strengths and competencies as section headings. Look at the following section headings and try to add more to each group.

Areas of professional experience	Business skills	Personal strengths and competencies
Marketing	Dealing with customers	Innovation and creativity
Presentations and publications	Financial management	Leadership
Sales	Managing people	Strategic thinking

c In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Which titles would you use for your skills-based CV?
- 2 Would you use the same categories for every job you apply for?
- 3 Would you use the requirements stated in each advertisement?

Our client is looking for someone who can fill the shoes of a busy PA for 9 to 12 months.

In addition to the usual diary management, organising of travel and coordinating of interviews and meeting rooms, you will be expected to facilitate new starters in the department, issue contracts, write up commission schemes and job descriptions and coordinate the company's subscription library.

The ideal candidate will be highly organised and able to multitask. Your written English must be of the highest standard, and as you will be liaising with executives at all levels, you must have excellent interpersonal skills. Previous experience essential.