



### Application essays and personality

*Which of these is it most important to show about yourself in your university application essay?*

Ambitious	Brave/ Courageous
Creative	Curious
Diligent/ Hard working	Efficient
Energetic	Extrovert
Flexible	Humble
Idealistic	Independent/ Self-sufficient
Logical	Mature
Open-minded	Organised
Patient	Proactive
Punctual	Responsible/ Dependable
Resilient/ Determined	Sociable
Systematic	Well-rounded

*Put the top adjectives above in order from one to ten, with the most important thing to show in an application essay at the top.*

*If you can, compare your answers with someone else and negotiate a new list that you both agree on.*

*Choose one of the adjectives near the top of the list and tell or write a story that illustrates that personality trait. If you are working with someone else, they should guess if your story is:*

- (totally) true
- partly based on the truth
- totally made up/ total fiction

*Choose one of your true stories and work together with your partner to add details to make it as interesting and relevant as you can, including evidence for any positive statements you make about yourself (but avoiding boasting/ sounding egotistical).*

*If your story includes positive personality adjectives, try taking them out and see whether the essay works better without them or can be changed to do so.*

*Which of these negative personality words do you think it is okay to mention as a weakness?*

Emotional	Moody	Disorganised
Obsessive	Unsociable	

*Brainstorm other negative personality adjectives and choose three more that might be okay to mention.*

*What could you say to mitigate the ones that you do think are acceptable to mention?*

### **Suggested answers - Comments on the personality adjectives**

- Ambitious – This can be negative if it means “over-ambitious”, especially in some cultures, but in certain situations it can be seen as good, especially if it basically means “motivated”
- Brave/ Courageous – Physical bravery isn’t relevant. If it means “proactive” and “resilient”, it could be a good thing.
- Creative – Always positive.
- Curious – This is an important point that people rarely mention, especially if it means a desire to ask questions and find things out.
- Diligent/ Hard working – This is important but taken for granted in someone applying for a top university. Too much emphasis on this might make it seem that you lack creativity or other positive aspects.
- Efficient/ Organised – Time management is important for studying, but make sure you don’t seem inflexible.
- Energetic – This is obviously good, but not all cultures think that you can do anything if you try hard enough and you might also want to also show proof of innate talent.
- Extrovert – You don’t want to seem like a party animal, but some mention of this can help offset any impression of being a stay-home swot with few social skills.
- Flexible – This is very important, and more in English-speaking countries than in some others.
- Humble – This isn’t really relevant to your studies, but explaining positive things about yourself without boasting is certainly important in your application.
- Idealistic – It could be good if you can tie your principles to your studies, but make sure it doesn’t seem like you will be preaching to everyone or that you are inflexible.
- Independent/ Self-sufficient – This is very important at uni, especially in Northern European and North American cultures and especially for post-graduate studies. If you come from one of those places, you probably don’t need to prove this.
- Logical – This is an important factor, especially for some courses, but is difficult to talk about in an interesting way and back up with evidence. Instead, you should try to make sure that your essay is organised in a logical way, therefore showing this trait.
- Mature – This is only important to show if the course will especially need maturity or you might lack it, e.g. if you are young or will be moving to a challenging place.
- Open-minded – This is very important both in your studies and in your interactions with other people on campus and in your future working life. You might want to especially emphasize this if your culture has a reputation (however undeserved) for the opposite.
- Patient – This is only relevant to certain professions or to moving to a less developed country, and there is a danger that emphasizing it could make you seem quite passive.
- Proactive – This is important, especially in some cultures such as America and some courses such as MBAs, but there is a thin line between this and pushy/ bossy.
- Punctual – This should be taken for granted so there is no need to mention it, and doing so might make it seem like you have few positive things to talk about.
- Responsible/ Dependable – This is unlikely to be relevant to your studies.
- Resilient/ Determined – This is very important to show, often one of the top ten.
- Sociable – Only emphasize this if your essay doesn’t mention human interactions.
- Systematic – This is only relevant to certain subjects like Maths, and even for such people overemphasizing this might make it seem like there is a lack of social skills.
- Well-rounded – This is important but difficult to show in a short essay.