



University
of Exeter

How to explore your subject

Once you have decided which subject(s) you would like to study at degree level you need to start doing your own research on it. Not only will this help you to be certain that it is the right subject, but it also forms an important part of your personal statement.

There are many different ways that you can explore your subject and it is best to have a mix of these in your personal statement:

Books

Academics research and write about their subject and these are often published in book form. Books are therefore a great way to learn more about your subject and prepare for university study. Have a look in your school or local library, speak to your teachers for recommendations, or have a look at university websites for suggested reading lists.

Podcasts and online lectures

There are many academic-level podcasts and online lectures available for you to download and listen to. Check out YouTube, as well as platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and BBC Sounds. There are other platforms too, often with a specific subject focus, that you can find online.

Free online courses

Many websites such as FutureLearn and Coursera offer free online courses as well as paid versions. Universities often collaborate to create these courses – check out the University of Exeter's webpage on [FutureLearn](#). Free online courses are sometimes referred to as Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs).

The news

This is a great way to keep up to date with your subject. Have a listen to the radio, watch the news in the evening, or pick up some newspapers (some publish their articles for free online).

Direct work experience

For some degree courses work experience is necessary. For example, you might be applying for nursing and get some work experience in a care home.

How you explore your subject is up to you, but it should be an interesting and enjoyable process giving you an insight into what it is like to study your subject at an academic level.



TRANSITION TIPS



One skill I wish I had developed prior to starting university is note taking and summarising large quantities of information, as there can be a lot of set reading in addition to course content and the majority of lecturers don't supply course notes. Building on this, understanding how you learn best saves precious time when trying to revise and prepare for exams. Time can go by very quickly during deadline and exam season, so if you can go into that period already prepared, you will thank yourself.

Lara, Business and Management with Industrial Experience.



I would say the best way to develop independent research skills is simply to practise. Make sure when given any homework/course work in school that you are researching the topics thoroughly, using the most useful websites and staying up to date. You could even test yourself and research a topic of interest to you, finding out as much as you can from a variety of sources.

Annabelle, Marine Biology.



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