

Essay-style application form answers can be intimidating and confusing for dyslexic learners, particularly if they've never had to complete one before. This activity is helpful for when young people are actively beginning to apply for jobs, to help them make sense of written application forms.

It's really helpful to model what an effective personal statement looks like, then work back from that point.

The following activity puts the young person in the employer's shoes.

They have two application forms, and only one can be selected for interview. They need to tick off the essential criteria met in each personal statement, to choose which candidate to take forward to an interview.

Strategies for writing application form answers

Going through this process will:

- help the young person make sense of what an effective personal statement looks like
- raise their awareness of how to address the person specification
- help them understand what they need to be working towards

The young person might be happy to work through the activity reading the materials themselves, or you might agree to read the statements out loud as they tick the person specification checklist.

Reflect with the young person on the following:

- What made you decide who had the stronger application form?
- What did that person do well?
- What could the other person have done better?
- What ideas can you take from these for your own application forms?



Written application forms can be tricky. Some employers will accept alternative formats, such as video or voice recorded applications. Look at the section on reasonable adjustments on page 66.

Who gets an interview?

Imagine you are the employer at Whole Care. You have one space left for interviews, and two applications to choose from.

Whose application meets the person specification best?

Tick the person specification list or use a highlighter on the applications to show how they match up.

Health and Wellbeing Support Worker vacancy

At Whole Care we believe everyone should have the chance to thrive. Whole Care is seeking a full time Health and Wellbeing Support worker to work one-to-one with isolated people in the community to support them increase their wellbeing.

Person Specification - Essential

- Caring, respectful, polite and compassionate
- Good communication skills – verbal and report writing
- Willing to work flexible shift patterns
- Experience of working in a care environment
- Experience of working with people with a range of support needs
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to plan and carry out tasks in a busy environment
- Able to contribute and work in a team environment
- Good interpersonal skills

Desirable

- IT skills
- Experience of working in a health and well-being setting
- Drivers Licence

Danny's Application

It is really important to me to support all people to access health and well-being services and I believe that this can be achieved through effective community-based support. I believe I would be good for this role, for the reasons I set out below:

Currently I work part-time at Soul Care, a community day care service people with a range of support needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs, and mental health difficulties. It's a demanding job where I work with adults and young people one to one and in groups.

I am highly caring and respectful towards all people, and clients I work with value my compassionate nature. Feedback forms from past clients the last year at my job with Soul Care show a 98% satisfaction rate. One recent comment was: "Danny has made a huge difference to my life. He is so polite and caring towards me, yet gives me the motivation I need to move my life forward. I couldn't have kept going without him."

In my role, I work with the team to plan and carry out individual wellbeing plans. Managers appreciate how organised I am, how well I plan and my ability to react when something changes.

At Soul Care, I work a varied rota, willing to work the early shifts, night shifts and holiday cover. The variety of times and flexibility of work suits me and I am willing to adapt to the needs of the work. I have very good interpersonal skills which I have demonstrated in my work at Soul Care. I am able to relate to people at all levels. Clients appreciate my ability to interact on their level, and colleagues and managers value the way I connect with clients and their families.

Within my role at Soul Care, I provide reports to colleagues and managers. I provide a verbal report daily at shift handover and I assist in writing up care plan reports weekly with senior staff. I take care to observe each client closely and record notes in line with our confidentiality policy.

In my spare time I volunteer with my local Foodbank. We are a team of 4, providing essential groceries to people in need in the community. The foodbank is extremely busy and I work behind the scenes packing the boxes and delivering to house-bound customers across the area. I encounter people with a range of needs. I pride myself on my ability to reassure them and connect them with other useful services in the community. As part of my role there, I have completed the Mental Health First Aid course. Reaching out to this group has helped me realise that I want to pursue a full time role in supporting isolated members of the community to increase their wellbeing.

I am competent and confident using computers and am able to use Microsoft Word and email programmes. I have a full, clean driving licence. I am ready to take on the challenges of a full time support worker role and I would relish the opportunity to develop my career with Whole Care.

“ Danny has made a huge difference to my life. He is so polite and caring towards me, yet gives me the motivation I need to move my life forward. I couldn't have kept going without him.

Lesley's Application

I have a lot of experience working with customers and have no problem working shifts.

I enjoy my work and have gained lots of knowledge and experience there. I have a friendly and helpful personality and find it easy to build good working relationships. I have a wide range of knowledge and skills gained through employment and participating in a range of work related projects as part of my ongoing personal development. I am capable and dependable with a methodical approach to planning and organising.

In my spare time I coach a hockey squad. Last season we reached the finals for our region.

At school I passed higher biology, PE and English. Since then I have been to college and completed an NC in Customer Service, which I loved doing.

When I worked at Shop-Smart I was employee of the month twice in 2016. I really like working with people and making them happy so I go out of my way to make sure the customer gets what they deserve. Everyone thought I was the best and I showed them what to do.

I am very ambitious and hardworking. I always make sure the job is done well and to a high standard. I am also a really good administrator and I pride myself on my ability to type 80 words per minute, which is a rare skill. My cousin had health problems when I was younger so it really matters to me to make sure these people get help.



Here's a video with a guide to using the CAR structure in a job interview answer:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-qWg5BUd44



Easy Impact Statements

Using writing frames to guide the process: Using CAR instead of STARR

Whether the task is making a CV, writing an application form, answering an interview question or delivering an elevator pitch, the expectation is usually to succinctly express your worth in a nutshell.

The STARR method (an answer that describes the Situation, the Task, the Action, the Result and the Reflections by the individual) is requested by many employers now, both in written and oral recruitment processes. Dyslexic learners can struggle to find the words and to structure such a response, often forgetting the acronym then not being able to distinguish between each step.

The following section breaks down the process in simpler terms, using the CAR structure instead: Context, Action, Result.

The CAR Cheat Sheet over the page provides a visual, memorable structure to develop the skill of providing punchy written or spoken answers in recruitment processes.

Following on from this is an application form writing frame with a step by step template to support writing impactful answers that address the essential criteria of a person specification.

Answering application and interview questions with the CAR structure

This template helps you structure answers employers look for in application forms and job interviews. Check out the example on the video link in the support notes.

Context

Set the scene. Where were you, what was happening?

Action

What did you do in this situation?

Result

What difference did you make?

Reflection

What did you learn from this?

**Bonus
section**

>>> SUPPORT NOTES

The blank page can be intimidating for dyslexic learners but writing frames can help young people learn to structure a piece of writing.

The following resource outlines a structure for writing an essay-style application answer similar to Danny's example on page 58.

Application Form Writing Frame



This template can help you to structure an application form answer like Danny's, addressing each part of the person specification in the job description.

Opening Statement

Person Specification _____

Context

Action

Result

Person Specification _____

Context

Action

Result

Person Specification _____

Context

Action

Result

Closing Statement

What a good opening statement looks like

Here are some examples of opening statements for long application answers. You can use these for your own applications changing the words in **bold** to fit the job you are applying for.

I think I would be very well suited to the role of **Sales Assistant** for the following reasons.

I am very interested in working with **Whole Care** and I believe I am well suited to the above post for the reasons I detail below.

Protecting our wildlife is fundamentally important to me and I believe this can be achieved through **creative media campaigns**.

What a good CAR paragraph looks like

Person specification: Customer service skills

Start off by naming the person specification:

I have excellent customer service skills.

Context: When I worked in Good Foods Wholesale, I ran the busy information desk.

Action: A key part of my role was handling complaints. I developed the ability to actively listen to the customers' needs, reassure them and take appropriate action to address their concern.

Result: Managers often praised me for my ability to turn the customer experience around. I was nominated for three 'top colleague' awards for excellent service last year.

More ways to start your CAR paragraphs:

I am very good at _____

I am experienced in _____

_____ is a key strength of mine



Look back at Danny's application and how he used the CAR structure for his answers.



Use words from the job description or organisation's website in your application.

What a good closing statement looks like

Here are some examples of closing statements for long application answers. You can use these for your own applications changing the words in bold to fit the job you are applying for.

I would deeply value the opportunity to work with the team at **Fab Co.** to **deliver high quality customer care in our community.**

The opportunity to **transform children's lives through outdoor education** inspires and motivates me and I am ready to commit to this important role.

I would relish the opportunity to work with **Newtown Libraries** as **working with people and communities and helping them to access information and learning** is deeply important to me.

I recognise that the chance to take on **a leadership** role with **Charity Pot** is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I am fully committed to contributing to the development of an **ethical** organisation which makes a positive difference to **people and communities.**