

# A-Level Super-Curricular Guide

ENHANCING YOUR UNIVERSITY APPLICATION

## Introduction to Super-curricular Activities

Super-curricular activities are different to extra-curricular activities. They both take place outside of the formal classroom setting, but they differ in their focus. Extra-curricular are generally unrelated to your academic studies and focus on transferable skills and personal interests. Super-Curricular are academic pursuits that go beyond the A-level syllabus, demonstrating your passion for a subject and your commitment to learning. Engaging in these activities can significantly strengthen your university applications and CVs. They showcase your intellectual curiosity, independent learning skills, and ability to think critically. This guide provides subject-specific suggestions and resources to help you develop a strong super-curricular profile.



Reading around the  
subject



Research



Visit a place of interest



Create

Please do check out the Google Classroom for more information that was provided during a PSHE session with lots of links and a powerpoint to help you with this process. If you have any questions speak to your form tutor, subject tutor or one of the Sixth Form Team.

There is a lot of information out there on the internet so this is just seen as a platform to get you started and you will find your are very much guided by your own personal interests and what you want to do - some of you will want to sit and read loads around your subject and beyond and some of you will want to be more active - choose what works for you.

## Biology

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read Journals:** Scientific journals like *Nature*, *Science*, and *New Scientist*.
- **Read popular science books:** *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins, *Genome* by Matt Ridley, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot.
- **Listen to podcasts:** *The Infinite Monkey Cage*, *Science Friday*.
- **Attend:** Biology lectures, seminars, and webinars at local universities or online.
- **Participate:** Science competitions like the Biology Olympiad or essay contests.
- **Undertake:** A research project in a relevant field, even if it's a small-scale experiment.
- **Volunteer:** At a local hospital, nature reserve, or wildlife sanctuary. See if you can get involved in a conservation project or medical setting.
- **Visit museums and zoos:** Natural History Museum, science museums, local zoos - depends what your interest is.

### Examples:

- Write a report on the ethical implications of CRISPR gene editing.
- Create a presentation on the impact of climate change on biodiversity.
- Review a scientific paper and present your findings to a small group.

### Resources:

- The Royal Society of Biology: <https://www.rsb.org.uk>
- PubMed
- Coursera Biology Courses
- New Scientist: <https://www.newscientist.com/>
- 

## Chemistry

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Chemistry journals such as *Chemical Science* and *Journal of the American Chemical Society*.
- **Read popular science books:** *The Disappearing Spoon* by Sam Kean, *Napoleon's Buttons* by Penny Le Couteur and Jay Burreson
- **Watch documentaries:** *Periodic Table of Videos*, *Chemistry: A Volatile History*.
- **Attend:** Chemistry lectures, seminars, and workshops at local universities or online.
- **Participate:** Chemistry competitions like the Chemistry Olympiad or RSC Schools Analyst Competition
- **Undertake:** A personal chemistry project, such as synthesizing a compound.
- **Follow:** Chemistry-related news and blogs.

### Examples:

- Investigate the chemistry behind a common household product.
- Research the role of chemistry in environmental sustainability.
- Write an article about a notable chemist and their contributions.

## Resources:

- The Royal Society of Chemistry: <https://www.rsc.org/>
- ChemSpider
- edX Chemistry Courses
- Chemistry World: <https://chemistryworld.com/>

## Physics

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read journals:** Physics journals like *Physics World* and *New Journal of Physics*.
- **Read popular scienc books:** A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking, Six Easy Pieces by Richard Feynman
- **Watch documentaries:** Cosmos, Horizon.
- **Online courses:** Coursera or edX courses on astrophysics, quantum mechanics, or cosmology.
- **Attend:** Physics lectures, seminars, and workshops at local universities or online.
- **Participate:** Physics competitions like the Physics Olympiad.
- **Undertake:** A coding project to simulate a physics phenomenon.
- **Visit:** Science museums and planetariums.

### Examples:

- Build a simple electronic circuit.
- Research the physics behind renewable energy sources.
- Write a report on the latest developments in astrophysics.

## Resources:

- The Institute of Physics: <https://www.iop.org/>
- Physics.org
- MIT OpenCourseWare Physics
- NASA: <https://www.nasa.gov/>

## Mathematics

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read popular Mathematical books:** Mathematics books that extend beyond the A-level syllabus. Fermat's Last Theorem by Simon Singh, The Code Book by Simon Singh.
- **Read academic papers:** Start with introductory papers on topics that interest you.
- **Attend:** Mathematics lectures, seminars, and workshops at local universities or online.
- **Participate:** Mathematics competitions like the Mathematical Olympiad, UKMT Maths Challenge, Senior Mathematical Challenge.
- **Learn to code:** Python or R for data analysis and modeling.

- **Undertake:** A coding project to solve mathematical problems.
- **Explore:** Online math resources and forums.
- **Puzzles:** Explore mathematical puzzles like Sudoku, KenKen, logic puzzles.
- **Lectures:** Are there any mathematical lectures at local universities or ones during the holidays.
- **Tutor younger students:** Practice explaining mathematical concepts.

### Examples:

- Learn about cryptography and its applications.
- Study different number systems and their properties.
- Research the history of a mathematical concept.

### Resources:

- The Mathematical Association: <https://www.m-a.org.uk>
- MathWorld
- Khan Academy Mathematics
- Plus Magazine: <https://plus.maths.org/>
- Numberphile (YouTube): <https://youtube.com/user/numberphile>

## Economics

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read economics news:** Economics publications like *The Economist* and *Financial Times*.
- **Read popular economics books:** *Freakonomics* by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, *Naked Economics* by Charles Wheelan.
- **Online courses:** Coursera or edX courses on microeconomics, macroeconomics, or econometrics.
- **Start an investment club:** Learn about investing and the stock market.
- **Listen to economics podcasts:** Planet Money, The Indicator from Planet Money.
- **Attend:** Economics lectures, seminars, and workshops at local universities or online.
- **Participate:** Economics competitions and debates.
- **Undertake:** An economics-related internship or volunteer work.
- **Follow:** Economic news and analysis. Understand how economic data affects the economy.

### Examples:

- Analyse the economic impact of a recent government policy.
- Research a particular economic theory or model.
- Create a blog about economic issues affecting your community.
- Research how different economic systems work - capitalism, socialism and mixed economies and work out your take on the pros and cons.

### Resources:

- The Economics Network: <https://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/>

- The World Bank
- Investopedia
- The Economist: <https://www.economist.com/>
- Financial Times: <https://www.ft.com/>

## History

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** History books and articles that go beyond the A-level syllabus. Biographies, historical novels, academic works.
- **Watch documentaries:** The World Wars, Civilisation
- **Listen to history podcasts:** Hardcore History, The History of England.
- **Visit historical sites and museums:** Local historical societies, national museums, battlefields.
- **Research family history:** Genealogy projects.
- **Attend:** History lectures, seminars, and museum visits.
- **Participate:** Historical debates and essay competitions.
- **Undertake:** Research on a historical topic of interest.
- **Volunteer:** At a local historical society or museum.

### Examples:

- Analyse primary source documents from a specific historical period that you are particularly interested in.
- Research the social and cultural impact of a historical event that you want to find more about.
- Write a blog about a historical figure or period.

### Resources:

- The Historical Association: <https://www.history.org.uk/>
- BBC History Magazine: <https://www.historyextra.com/>
- JSTOR: <https://jstor.org.uk/>
- National Archives: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

## English Literature

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Widely and deeply, beyond the set texts. Explore different genres, periods and authors.
- **Join a book club:** Discuss books with others.
- **Attend:** Theatre performances, poetry readings, and literary festivals. Meet authors and learn about their work.
- **Visit other libraries or places mentioned in books:** research a library you'd like to visit or a place mentioned in a book and explore.
- **Participate:** Writing competitions, book clubs, and literary discussions.

- **Undertake:** Critical analysis of literary works.
- **Write:** Your own creative pieces (poetry, short stories, plays).
- **Start a blog or online journal:** Share your thoughts on literature, make comparisons, analyse literary texts and develop your critical thinking beyond the classroom.

#### Examples:

- Write a comparative essay on two works by different authors.
- Research the historical context of a literary work.
- Start a book blog reviewing books and discussing literary themes.

#### Resources:

- The Poetry Society
- The British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/>
- Project Gutenberg
- The Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>
- <https://www.oxford-royale.com/articles/super-curricular-activities>

## Modern Languages (e.g., French, Spanish, German)

#### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Newspapers, magazines, and books in the target language.
- **Attend:** Language exchange events and cultural festivals.
- **Participate:** Language competitions and debates.
- **Apps and websites:** Duolingo, Memrise or Babbel.
- **Meet:** Meet up with students on the same course as you and only talk in your target language for the day.
- **Listen:** Listen to music and podcasts in the target language
- **Practice:** Practice speaking with native speakers, language exchange partners, online tutors.
- **Travel:** If budget allows, travel to the countries where the language is spoken.
- **Research:** Research the culture and history of the countries where the language is spoken.
- **Learn:** If you want to learn Chinese at university along with your A-Level subject start to learn that language.
- **Undertake:** A language immersion program or study abroad experience.
- **Watch:** Films and TV shows in the target language.

#### Examples:

- Translate articles or short stories.
- Create a presentation on a cultural aspect of a country where the language is spoken.
- Practice speaking with native speakers.

#### Resources:

- Alliance Française: <https://www.alliancefrancaise.org/>

- Instituto Cervantes: <https://www.cervantes.es/>
- Goethe-Institut: <https://www.goethe.de/>

## Computer Science

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Computer science journals and tech blogs.
- **Attend:** Coding workshops, hackathons, and tech conferences.
- **Participate:** Coding competitions and online challenges.
- **Undertake:** Personal coding projects and develop software applications.
- **Contribute:** To open-source projects.

### Examples:

- Develop a mobile app or website.
- Contribute to an open-source project.
- Learn a new programming language or framework.

### Resources:

- GitHub
- Stack Overflow
- Codecademy

## Art and Design

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Visit:** Art galleries, museums, and design exhibitions.
- **Participate:** Art and design workshops and competitions.
- **Undertake:** Personal art and design projects.
- **Build:** A portfolio showcasing your work. Try different mediums and if budget allows attend some workshops.
- **Explore:** Different art and design techniques and styles, find out more about different artists and their work.

### Examples:

- Create a series of paintings, drawings, or sculptures.
- Design a website or mobile app.
- Participate in a community art project.

### Resources:

- Tate



- Design Museum
- Arts Council England

## Geography

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Geography journals and articles about current environmental issues.
- **Read Geography books:** Prisoners of Geography by Tim Marshall, Factfulness by Hans Rosling
- **Watch documentaries:** Our Planet, Before the Flood - there are many out there.
- **Attend:** Geography lectures, seminars, and field trips.
- **Participate:** Geography competitions and environmental campaigns.
- **Undertake:** Geographical research projects and fieldwork.
- **Travel:** If budget allows, explore different regions and cultures.
- **Volunteer:** With environmental organisations or local conservation efforts. You can sometimes do volunteer work free of charge and other times you can pay to work for the National Trust in some beautiful parts of the country - research it.

### Examples:

- Conduct a geographical study of your local area.
- Analyse the environmental impact of a development project - are there any large projects locally can you read the Environmental Impact Assessment for the project.
- Write a report on a global environmental issue.

### Resources:

- The Royal Geographical Society: <https://www.rgs.org/>
- National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/>
- Environmental Protection Agency
- The Geographical Magazine: <https://geographical.co.uk/>

## Psychology

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read:** Psychology journals and books such as The Man who mistook his wife for a hat and other clinical tales by Oliver Sacks, The Psychopath Test: A journey through the madness industry by Jon Ronson, Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman  
<https://www.oxfordscholastica.com/blog/psychology-articles/10-psychology-books-everyone-should-read/>
- **Attend:** Psychology lectures and seminars.
- **Participate:** Psychology-related discussions and debates.
- **Undertake:** Small research projects or experiments.
- **Volunteer:** At mental health organisations.



### Examples:

- Research a particular psychological disorder.
- Analyse a famous psychological experiment.
- Write a report on the impact of social media on mental health.

### Resources:

- The British Psychological Society
- American Psychological Association
- Psychology Today

## Politics

### Actionable Suggestions:

- **Read Politics books:** Why nations fail by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson  
<https://www.oxfordscholastica.com/blog/politics-articles/10-books-every-politics-student-should-read/>
- **Follow PM Question Time**
- **Attend a Summer Course:** These can be quite pricey. <https://www.oxfordscholastica.com/oxford-summer-school/>
- **Listen to a podcast:** The Rest is Politics, Page 94: The Private Eye Podcast, Political Thinking with Nick Robinson. <https://www.cuepodcasts.com/post/best-political-podcasts>

### Examples:

- Compare different papers take on political events around the world.
- Look at political green and white papers - write a report on your opinion.

### Resources:

- Check out this <https://www.haydonschool.com/attachments/download.asp?file=493&type=pdf>

## Not every subject is mentioned BUT....

There are some other great resources out there. Please do your own research as Super curricular activities are very personal to your own particular interests. Some suggestions are:

- University of Cambridge: [https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular\\_suggestions.pdf](https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular_suggestions.pdf)
- Haydon School: <https://www.haydonschool.com/search/default.asp?pid=0> and type in Super curricular and it will bring up a sheet per subject on things you can do - an excellent resource.
- Worcester College: <https://www.worc.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guide-to-Super-curriculars.pdf>

- Whickham School: <https://www.whickhamschool.org/sixth-form/beyond-the-classroom/supercurricular-activities/>
- <https://poolhayes.attrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2021/01/Year-12-super-curricular-activities.pdf>



## Tips for Writing a UCAS Personal Statement

- **Start early:** Don't leave it to the last minute. Give yourself plenty of time to draft and revise your statement. Ask someone who knows you well what they think, also ask someone that doesn't know you so well - they may spot a gap in your statement.
- **Show, don't tell:** Use specific examples to illustrate your skills and experiences. Avoid generic statements.
- **Reflect on your experiences:** Explain what you learned from your super-curricular activities and how they have influenced your academic interests.
- **Be authentic:** Write in your own voice and be genuine about your passion for the subject.
- **Proofread carefully:** Ensure your statement is free of grammatical errors and typos.
- **Structure:** Follow a clear structure. Introduce yourself, describe why you are interested in your chosen subject, highlight relevant experiences, and explain your future aspirations.
- Check out our other guides on interview questions etc.

## Creating a Strong CV

- **Highlight your academic achievements:** Include your A-level grades (or predicted grades) and any academic awards or honors.
- **Showcase your super-curricular activities:** Describe the activities you have participated in and the skills you have developed.
- **Include relevant work experience:** If you have any work experience, highlight the skills and responsibilities that are relevant to your chosen field.
- **List your skills:** Include both hard skills (e.g., programming languages, data analysis) and soft skills (e.g., teamwork, communication).
- **Keep it concise:** Aim for a one- or two-page CV.

- **Tailor your CV:** Customize your CV for each specific application.
- **Use action verbs:** Start your bullet points with action verbs to describe your accomplishments (e.g., managed, developed, analyzed).
- **Proofread carefully:** Ensure your CV is free of grammatical errors and typos.
- There are lots of website that will offere suggestions and different formats - do a little research and find one that suits your style. Afterall this is about you advertising you.



## Conclusion

Engaging in super-curricular activities is a valuable investment in your future. By exploring your academic interests beyond the classroom, you can develop valuable skills, enhance your university applications and CVs, and prepare yourself for a successful career. Use this guide as a starting point and tailor your super-curricular activities to your individual interests and goals. Good luck!

**DO  
YOUR  
OWN  
RESEARCH**

