**Successful in applying for a place on Experimental Psychology at Oxford**

How did you research which universities to apply to:

* Initially looked at league tables for my course, which unis had better reputations for the subject I wanted to study
* Time given for research in specials - I found this really useful, using unifrog etc. to look at unis whilst having teachers around to ask for help
* I focused more on looking at the unis with the best courses (in terms of structure, content, facilities, research departments for Psychology) then from this selection looked at the locations I preferred

Why did you want to apply to Oxbridge?:

* Rated UK number 1 for psychology, world leading psychology research department
* The tutorial system appealed to me - not just for 1-to-1 help/individualised feedback but having the chance to have open-ended discussion on topics that interest you in-depth, personalised learning
* I felt I had nothing to lose by applying (other than some extra time you have to invest in interview prep etc.), as long as you are willing to do that then you can gain a lot from the process even if you don’t end up with an offer

Why did you choose Oxford not Cambridge:

* Mainly for the course (they can be quite different at each e.g. Experimental psychology at Oxford, or Psychological and Behavioural sciences at Cambridge) - I preferred the focus on research and scientific psych that they have at Oxford
* I also preferred the location, Oxford is a bigger city, supposedly has better nightlife etc.

How you chose your college:

* Although this is important I wouldn’t stress too much because you can easily be reallocated to a different college after interview (like me - I have an open offer so I could be at any college), and all colleges generally offer the same facilities
* I mainly looked at the location (they are all fairly central but some are further out and therefore have bigger gardens/green spaces), which ones were nearer to the psychology department
* There are websites like ‘choose your oxford college’, ‘oxford college pros and cons’ on the Student Room, ‘Oxford alternative prospectus’ where there’s loads of information from current students about the ins and outs of each - how much meals and drinks cost, what students think etc. which I found really useful
* Not all colleges offer every course either - check which ones offer your course and for me this whittled it down quite a lot already

Super curricular study:

* For my statement, I read 2 books relating to my subject but in quite niche areas that interest me - everyone says tutors would rather you had read fewer things but in more depth than read lots but without real thought
* EPQ - I wrote lots about this in my personal statement and linked it to skills that will be useful for my specific course
* I also mentioned TED talks but tried to link these to other things I had read about or topics that they encouraged me to research further

Preparation for the admissions test, how I found it and tips:

(I took the TSA)

* The question format was unlike any other exam I’ve taken, so past papers were the most useful - there are loads on the Oxford website with explained answers
* The essay section was harder to prepare for - practicing writing a full answer in 30 mins was useful to cope with the time pressure
* I watched lots of youtube videos and videos on the Oxford website about the TSA - what to expect and how to prepare, what tutors are looking for
* I didn’t think my TSA went very well, but this is only 1 part of the application and they take into account everything else so it’s not the be-all and end-all

How I prepared for interview and my experience:

* I had 2 mock interviews arranged through school (1 with a professor from uni of York and one with a past Oxford psych student) - these were really useful in practicing discussing my personal statement and unseen material, also made me feel more prepared for the interview format in general which made me less nervous
* I spent a while re-familiarising myself with the stuff on my statement - mainly making sure I could express my own opinions on anything I had read in a concise way in case they asked me (which they did in one of my interviews)
* Generally the interviews were less stressful than I had expected - it was obvious that the tutors wanted you to do the best you could, show your potential, and they would prompt you if you were stuck (it was also fine to say you weren’t sure or didn’t understand, they would just redirect you)
* My tips would be to try see it as an academic discussion with someone who is an expert in your subject rather than a test or exam, the 30 mins goes by really quick so trying to enjoy the experience and learn something from it is important
* Be prepared to know nothing about the material they show you (I found mine really confusing) - they don’t expect factual knowledge they just want you to articulate your thought process and see how you solve a problem etc.

Any extra tips:

* If you think you haven’t done very well after each stage in the process (which is normal) try not to let this affect you or your performance in the next stage e.g. don’t let one bad interview ruin your others, because it’s impossible to know whether you will get an offer or not. Tutors are looking for specific skills and will look at your application holistically. I didn’t think I would get an offer but just take each stage as it comes and do your best
* Have good insurance options that you would be equally happy to go to in case you don’t get an Oxbridge offer, in which case you won’t be too disappointed.