



Lucy Cavendish College  
University of Cambridge

# Developing an 'Enquiring Mindset'

**Dr Mark King, Assistant Senior Tutor**

Lucy Cavendish College Admissions, University of Cambridge  
[outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk)



# In this session

- What is an 'enquiring mindset'?
- Take the test
- Review results
- Develop your skills



# What is an 'enquiring mindset'?



- Academically and intellectually curious: appetite for new knowledge and skills.
- Undaunted by challenge, enjoys taking on new problems.
- Creative approach to problem solving, able to apply knowledge to new situations and find ways to approach new problems.
- Autonomous, highly motivated and energetic approach; proactive.
- Strives to achieve and willing to take risks and work hard to do so.

# What does this have to do with Oxbridge admissions?

- Our research suggests that students with an 'enquiring mindset' often do well during the admissions process and on the course.
- Skills directly transferable: academic curiosity, problem solving, drive, commitment and proactivity.
- Adopting an 'enquiring' approach to interview questions – less likely to be daunted.
- Degree of self-reflection can help to increase competitiveness of application.





# ‘Enquiring’/‘Enterprising’

***At Lucy Cavendish we talk about wanting to admit students with an ‘enterprising mindset’. This DOES NOT mean people who want to be entrepreneurs, although it would not exclude them.***

An ‘enterprising mindset’ means someone who:

- Has a strong need for achievement;
- Likes to be in charge;
- Seeks opportunities and use resources to achieve plans;
- Believes that they possess or can gain the qualities to be successful;
- Is innovative and willing to take a calculated risk.

***In practice, these are the same characteristics as an enquiring person.***



## ***Achievement:***

- Highly self-motivated.
- Relies on own ability.
- Goal-driven
- Effective worker.

## ***Creative:***

- Academically curious.
- Versatile and able to draw on knowledge.
- Innovative.
- Intuitive, synthesises ideas and makes good guesses.

## ***Autonomous:***

- Independent worker.
- Proactive.
- Strong self-expression.
- Determination.

## ***Risk taking:***

- Decisive and willing to act when necessary.
- Self-aware of strengths and weaknesses.
- Analytical and can weigh likely outcomes/possibilities.



# What are we looking for?

- Academic ability and potential
- Satisfy any subject requirements
- Ability to think critically and independently
- Genuine subject interest – motivation and enthusiasm
- Vocational commitment (where appropriate)

***Achievement***

***Creative***

***Autonomous***

***Risk Taking***





# How can I assess my own characteristics?

**Many online personality tests exist. A good one is:**

**<http://www.get2test.net/index.html#home>**

**Answer the questions as if they applied specifically to your studies (interpret 'work' as 'studies').**





Lucy Cavendish College  
University of Cambridge

Take the test and download  
your results. We will  
reconvene in 15 minutes.



# What do my results mean?

This is an opportunity for self-assessment and to consider ways in which you could develop your skills.

Your overall result tells you, broadly, how enterprising/enquiring you are at present. However, the guidance on the test site is mostly aimed at those wishing to develop entrepreneurial skills, so it is less helpful.

# What do my results mean?

## Achievement

### ***Low Score:***

- You may lack confidence in your own ability or have a pessimistic outlook. Consider working on your familiarity with your subject to build your confidence.
- You may look for instruction, rather than taking a proactive approach. Consider taking a more active approach, setting realistic goals and working to achieve them.

### ***Medium to High Score:***

- You trust your own ability and focus well on tasks at hand, broadly working effectively.
- You are driven and committed to your studies.
- Keep applying yourself and working to develop your skills and knowledge.

### ***Very High Score:***

- Your self-belief and commitment is commendable, but you may lack balance. Try to achieve a healthier work/life balance.
- Continue to believe in yourself, but be aware of any areas of weakness, too.

# What do my results mean?

## Creativity

### ***Low Score:***

- You may be reluctant to move beyond areas of knowledge in which you are comfortable, or to engage with challenging new material.
- Consider exposing yourself to new and challenging material from within your subject to develop your ability to engage with it.
- Look to develop your academic curiosity in the same way.

### ***Medium to High Score:***

- You are imaginative and innovative in your approach to problem solving.
- You are able to bring existing knowledge to new and challenging problems.
- Continue to develop these skills through further exposure to new material from your subject.

### ***Very High Score:***

- Your creative approach can lead you to real moments of innovation. However, ensure you do not overlook the fundamentals and the basics in your rush to come up with something new.
- Ensure you don't become too much of a 'jack of all trades'.



# What do my results mean?

## Autonomy

### ***Low Score:***

- You may look for instruction, rather than taking a proactive approach. Consider taking a more active approach, setting realistic goals and working to achieve them.
- You may lack confidence in your ability, which may mean that you don't defend your positions well. Try to think of additional points that could be made in support of your ideas.

### ***Medium to High Score:***

- You have a strong belief in yourself and take a proactive approach to your studies. Keep doing so.
- You have an opinion and are willing to back yourself in discussions and debates – continue to develop your ability to do so.
- You know your own interests. Keep thinking about why these areas matter to you.

### ***Very High Score:***

- Your self-belief and independence are commendable. However, be open to the contributions that others can make.
- Remember to listen to others and to incorporate their ideas into your thinking.



# What do my results mean?

## Risk Taking

### ***Low Score:***

- You are very risk-averse. Whilst this can be sensible, it may hold you back from engaging with a task, or from demonstrating what you can do.
- Try to overcome your fear of being 'wrong' and be willing to give things a go.
- Work on your ability to reach a judgement based on the information you have.

### ***Medium to High Score:***

- You have a healthy balance and are prepared to put your ideas out there when you think you can contribute. You are capable of taking an innovative approach.
- You are decisive and can reach a judgement based on the information you are shown.
- Continue to develop your analytical skills to help you evaluate problems you encounter (and their potential solutions).

### ***Very High Score:***

- Your self-belief and independence are commendable. However, be open to the contributions that others can make.
- Remember to listen to others and to incorporate their ideas into your thinking.
- Make sure you have got the basics right when tackling any problem.



# What is the purpose of all this?

- There are various different stages of the application process where your character traits and inclinations will affect how you perform.
- The most obvious example of this is in the interview.
- Imagine you are presented with something new and challenging that you have not seen before. What do you do?
- Recognising your strengths and weaknesses can help you to prepare for the admissions process.





# How can I develop my skills?

- Become more proactive. Further immerse yourself in your supracurricular subject engagement.
- Step outside your comfort zone. Challenge yourself with higher level texts or unfamiliar topics.
- Express yourself. Especially if you are reluctant to do so, practice explaining and justifying your ideas and moderating them based on feedback from others.
- Problem solve. Practice problem solving in fields related to your subject using the many excellent websites that exist.



Lucy Cavendish College  
University of Cambridge

# Any questions?

Or you can always email us at **[outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk)**

Find out more about Lucy Cavendish, sign-up to our newsletter and get involved with events:  
[www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants](http://www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants).

