Writing a Statement of Purpose

General comments:
1) Importance: The statement of purpose is always important but is relative to other aspects of application.

2) Time consuming: the statement of purpose needs several revisions- with outside review and input

3) Attempt to provide personal information that is not specifically provided elsewhere in the application

4) The tone is moderate but serious and ambitious (not too cheerful or too morose) and avoid humor unless you are sure- use first person (I, me, my)

5) Write for an audience of faculty or professionals in the field (1-2 pages-single spaced)

6) Remember that your writing will be clear to you- but will it be clear to someone else who only has the written word to go by

7) The statement of purpose is an opportunity to “stand-out” from the crowd

8) It is an opportunity to showcase your writing abilities, but also your critical thinking skills as you relate your background to field of study

9) The objective is to gain acceptance- every sentence should be written with this in mind

Writing the statement:
1) Brainstorm previous academic experiences and qualifications but also include relevant work or other experiences…sales job for social psyc, lab tech for neuroscience

2) Make several outlines of brainstormed items and see which order of presentation best-reflects the overall theme of ‘why you should accept me’

3) Write in a straightforward manor. Avoid flowery language or language used strictly to impress a reader. Be concise. Never use more words than necessary.

4) Be specific in your writing: better to say what techniques, procedures, and apparatus you are familiar with than just saying that you have much research experience…don’t say ‘good with computers’ or ‘can handle animals’ say what computer programs you used…what type of animal and how did you handle them

5) Be truthful and don’t make boasting statements or conclusions for the reader. Instead of concluding that you are a good researcher, just give your qualifications and let the reader make that conclusion
6) Try answering these questions:
   What have I learned academically that stimulated me to pursue this field?
   How did I learn this? Lecture, readings, hands-on experiences
   Are there any personal experiences that influenced my career choice?
   What are my career goals - what will you do with the degree?

7) Use the statement to address a weakness or discrepancy in your record
   Low grades freshman year - death in family ruined one semester - figure grades
   without chemistry or math - grades over Jr and Sr years if higher - grades in major

8) Address any special circumstances such as working through school - and medical or
   financial hardships that you worked through - it shows character

9) Revision - best if you can put away for several days - examine every word and ask if it
   is necessary ... plan on revising your statement several times

**Typical flow of a statement of purpose:**

1) Begin by introducing yourself to the reader and provide some details about your
   personal background as it relates to the field of study

2) Then discuss your academic experiences as they relate to your field - include both
   academic activities as well as extra curricular activities

3) Then discuss your research experiences or if none, talk about your research related
   courses and how they prepared you for research

4) Then make the connection between these experiences and your field of study - it is
   good to mention a major idea in the field of study - it shows that you are knowledgeable
   and think about the field

5) Mention any special aspects of your application (grades, GRE scores, publication)

6) Move on to what you expect from the program and your career goals

7) Mention why program is a good match with career goals

8) You can standardize your statement but should tailor the last paragraph specifically for
   each program that you apply to ... reviewers will note this