Statement of purpose tips

You can start with an appropriate quote, an historical example, a personal narrative example, a paradox, a question, a shocking statement, or relevant statistics, as appropriate.

Key potential ideas:

- Learn – Maximizing my understanding of how everything works. "Everything is interesting if you go into it deeply enough"
- Do – "There are people who are 'ones' and there are people who are 'zeroes' – people who act vs. people who don't"

- *Para 1: Explain the **significance of your field** to the world in general. Start with an analogy or a fact. For example if you are going to pursue Environmental Engineering you can express concern about the depreciating state of energy and water, and carry on gracefully from there. Then mention **how are you gonna solve this so called issue** and to do that what course do you intend to pursue at the desired university.*
- *Para 2: Explain how your **undergraduate education** will play a significant role in your graduate development. Mention **specific courses** you opted in your undergrad (and why) and how will they complement the **courses you intend to take** in your grad school. At this point, visit the university's department website, open the course contents, and copy down the relevant courses from there. The university gets impressed by this research you did.*
- *Para 3: Mention you **source of motivation** here. It really helps to include a short story (2 lines) that explains how you built up this solid motivation. Then explain **what you plan to do after grad school**. This is a very important section of your SOP. Make sure you show the school that your goals are crystal clear and you are a serious prospective student.*
- *Para 4: Mention here all the **relevant projects/internships** you have completed at this stage. It is essential to include some **relevant details** and what have you learnt from these projects that would inch you closer to your set goals you mentioned in the previous paragraphs. What was the **goal** of the project? What was the **core technical challenge**? What were the **key insights** to the solution?*
- *Para 5: **Your position in class** and justify it. This is a short paragraph where you can also mention some **abstract skills**.*
- *Para 6: This is dedicated to all the **social activities** you have been involved in since you were born. US universities have a soft corner for social activities so make sure you do have something to write here! It can be anything from blood donation to some serious **NGO work**.*
- *Para 7: Mention some of your **co-curricular activities** here, which show that you are not just a boring academic person, but also do have a life! This content makes the admission committee get to know you on a **personal level**, and it really helps them to form an image of you.*
- *Para 8: Ok, now according to my POV this is **THE MOST IMPORTANT PARAGRAPH** of your SOP. Here you have to tell the university people **why the hell do you wanna go there**!! As I said earlier, make sure you give them solid reasons for*

*doing so. These reasons should get them thinking and admiring their university. You require a lot of research to write this para. I used to scan each and every word on the department website before even thinking to come out with my reasons. Mention **names of professors, labs, courses, facilities, projects and what not** to get their attention.*

- *Para 9: This is the **conclusion** of your SOP. Remember to be modest and be soft. **Express your gratitude** and humbly ask for scholarship if you want one. That should do it.*

*1. How did you become interested in this field? Establish that you have had a **long-term interest in the field** and that you have taken **positive steps in pursuing your interest**. Give the committee members **a sense of your particular talents and abilities** and their relevance to your academic interests.*

*2. What experiences have contributed toward your **preparation for further study** in this field? Demonstrate your interest by providing **examples of research experiences, internships, work experience, community service, publications, or life experiences**. Briefly describe what you did in each experience. Also, make sure to articulate **what you have learned about the field and how those lessons stimulated you to pursue an advanced degree**.*

*3. What are your **future goals**? Specifically state your **degree objective** (Master's or Ph.D.) and specify what **subdisciplines you are interested in pursuing**. For example, if you are applying in political science, the committee needs to know whether you are pursuing American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, or Political Theory. Let the reader know that you are planning a future career as a university professor, researcher, or consultant, or in public service or private practice (or whatever your goal happens to be).*

*4. What are your **research interests**? Within your subdiscipline, you should be able to **identify one or two topics that are of interest to you**. When possible, be specific about your research agenda. Remember that you will be working with professors in research; therefore, your **research interests should parallel those of the faculty**. (You will usually not be expected to know exactly what you want to research; faculty know that initial interests often change.)*

*5. **MOST IMPORTANT**: How are you a "match" for the program to which you are applying? Explain what attracts you most to the institution/program to which you are applying. Align your research interests with those of one or more of the affiliated professors. The better the **"match" with the program/professors**, the better the chance that you will be admitted.*

Since then I stumbled upon a new research field that I fell in love with and used my SOP to talk about how my previous research experience set me up with the right skill set to succeed in this new field and what I would like about working in this new field compared to my old one. I also extensively talked about **the kinds of problems I want to tackle** (and how I would tackle them), about why the

department's (+ individual faculty's) research interests me, and **how I will make use of their unique resources to produce better research**.

- What have you already done? What problems have you solved, or at least worked on? What independent projects have you been part of? **What were your key contributions?** What did you learn? What did you teach the world? How do your results compare to what was already known? **What original ideas are you most proud of?** Be specific, technical, credible, and confident (but not arrogant). Refer the reader to your web page for more details. Have a web page with more details: preprints, project reports, source code, videos, etc.
- What are you working on now? What problems are you currently trying to solve? **What are you currently trying to build?** What are the open research issues? **What intellectual tools are you using, or learning to use?** What are you reading? What prior results are you building on? How are you building on your own earlier work? **What is your current favorite half-baked idea?** Be specific, technical, credible, and confident (but not arrogant). If you have partial results, refer the reader to your web page for more details. Have a web page with more details.
- What might you want to work on in the future? What problems you would like to solve? **What would you like to build?** Do you want to push your existing projects further? If so, how? What new areas are you interested in exploring? What are your long-term career goals? Convince the reader that you are knowledgeable about your target area(s), but be honest about your ignorance. Be specific, credible, and confident (but not arrogant).
- **How does my department fit your research goals?** (If the rest of your statement is well-written, the reader already knows the answer to this question, but you also need convince the reader that *you* know.)

The only credible reason to "target a particular professor" is if that professor's research interests *already* mirror your own. If you try to craft the bulk of your statements to different professors in different departments, the result will be much shallower, and therefore much less persuasive, than if you describe your own well-developed research interests.

During these past 7 semesters, some of the core subjects that captured my attention are X,Y and Z. This shows that I was involved in the coursework deeply.
The reader is in search of some credible evidence from your past to finally make up his/her mind about your admission decision. So let's give it to him/her. *Internships kept apart, I have received many prestigious awards and scholarships like…… . Both my internships came through internationally acclaimed scholarships namely…. . All these scholarships are highly competitive and select only a handful of students from thousands of applicants across the globe.* Here I used an adjective instead of a number because universities usually ask to upload CVs too during application and in my CV I have mentioned those numbers. So to make it non-redundant, I have used the adjective *handful. I would like to specially mention……. . **My work was recognised by…**…… To add, I have been awarded…… .*

Yes, there are ways to stand out amongst the piles and piles of applications and make a faculty member remember you. How? Simple: talk research. The best way to convince the admissions committee you're ready for a phd is to talk research. Tell us your ideas, what's your vision for your area, **what big inevitable trends do you see in the future**, and how do you capitalize on them? What are hard problems you've already tried to tackle, and how

did you succeed/fail? This is where an applicant can show that they have the clarity of thought to think hard about a real problem, and show the reasoning skills (and intuition for identifying tricky or interesting problems).

Important resources

https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-points-to-be-covered-in-a-statement-of-purpose-for-applying-for-graduate-school

https://honors.uiowa.edu/sites/honors.uiowa.edu/files/wysiwyg_uploads/Personal%20Statement%20Invitation%20to%20Frustration.pdf