Writing the Statement of Purpose

A) Things to Keep in Mind:

1. What the admissions committee will read between the lines: motivation, competence, potential as a graduate student.
2. Emphasize everything from a positive perspective and write in an active voice, not a passive voice.
3. Demonstrate everything by example; don’t say directly that you’re a persistent person, show it.
4. If something significant occurred that affected your grades, such as poverty, illness, or excessive work, state it. Write it affirmatively, however, showing your perseverance.
5. Make sure everything is linked with continuity and focus.
6. The essay should be approximately (1½-2 pages) single-space, 12pt. font.

B) Writing the Statement of Purpose:

Part 1: Introduction

Tell them what you’re interested in, and perhaps, what sparked your desire for graduate study.

Part 2: Summarize what you did as an undergraduate

a) Research you conducted. Indicate with whom, the title of the project, your responsibilities and the outcome. Write technically, or in the style of your discipline. Professors are the people who read these statements.

b) Important paper or thesis project you completed, as well as anything scholarly beyond your curricular requirements.

c) Work experience, especially if you had any kind of responsibility for testing, designing, or researching or interning in an area similar to what you wish to study in graduate school.

Part 3: Indicate your current activities

If you graduated and worked prior to returning to grad school, indicate what you’ve been doing: company or non-profit, your work/design team, responsibilities, what you learned. You can also indicate here how this helped you focus your graduate studies.

Part 4: Elaborate on the topic you wish to pursue for graduate school

Here you indicate what you would like to study in graduate school in further detail.

a) Indicate your area of interest, then state questions, concerns, and thoughts associated with the topic. This should be an ample paragraph!

b) Look on the web for information about departments you’re interested in, as well as the professors and their research. Are there professors whose research interests parallel yours? If so, indicate this. If you can infer that you’ve read their work, all the better.

c) End your statement in a positive manner, indicating a readiness for the challenges ahead of you.