Know Your Audience

Undergraduate admissions are generally centralized and handled by an admissions office. The people making admissions for graduate school are faculty in the program. (Note: MBA programs work more like undergraduate admissions).

The difference in your audience affects two main aspects of your application.

1. Your essays
   - Write to an informed audience who understands the technical language of your field. However, too much technical language from your particular area can unintentionally exclude review committee members who have different areas of expertise.
   - Technical language does not only mean science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Any discipline has jargon and technical language, even humanities disciplines have special terminology.
   - Faculty in your field are looking to see that you present yourself like someone who has experience in the field you want to go into for graduate school. This applies to any discipline.

   If a research statement is required, write as technically as possible and as if for a peer-reviewed academic journal.

2. Who writes your letters of recommendation
   Letter writers corroborate and amplify what you write in your statement of purpose. Pick your letter writers carefully and specifically. You want recommenders who:

   - Have an equivalent or higher-level degree than what you are applying for, and, if you are applying for a research degree, are researchers
   - Have a degree in the same field you are applying to be in or a relevant field that you are hoping to transition to
   - Come from your home institution (at least 1 but preferably 2). One writer can be from another university unless a program states otherwise.
   - May come from industry if their experience matches the opportunity you are applying for. For example, you are applying for a non-research master's and want an internship supervisor to write a letter. Do not use industry writers for research degrees unless you did industry research with that person, and they have an equivalent degree or higher in the field or a related field to the one you are applying for.
Cultivating relationships with faculty and other professionals starts in your first year of college. By your senior year, you want to be able to name at least three people that you can confidently ask to be your letter writers for graduate school applications.