

Writing cover letters to land a D.C. internship

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Internship opportunities in the nation's capital are competitive, with dozens of college students submitting applications for each opening. Your competition includes students who are attending universities in the Washington, D.C., area and also from universities across the country. Your resume and cover letter will help hiring managers see why you are the best candidate. Here are some tips for refining your cover letter.

1. **Think about your audience:** Hiring managers for D.C. internships are reviewing dozens of applications. So, your cover letter should be as tightly written as possible and organized in a way that helps quickly sell the selection team on why they should pick you. Your letter should be no longer than one page – and shorter is often better.
2. **Don't just repeat your resume:** Remember that your cover letter will be read in connection your resume, so it is a chance to emphasize or elaborate on some of your qualifications and how they relate to the specific duties listed in the internship job posting. Is there a specific piece of work you have done with your journalism or communications skills that illustrates what motivates you to do this kind of work? Or how you are creative, dogged or resourceful? Be as specific as possible – but write tightly.
3. **Consider writing the top of your letter like the lede of a news story:** Your letter can start out like a straight news lede with the basic facts about you and the job you are applying for. Some examples can be [found here](#). Or you might consider sharing a well-written anecdote that quickly shows the hiring manager something about your skills, motivation or passion for journalism or communications work. Some examples of this technique can be [found here](#). Mizzou Career Tools, [at this link](#), also has cover letter samples and resume examples. Be sure your letter is free of typos, grammar and spelling errors. Consider having a friend read your letter before you send it out.
4. **Focus on what you can do for the employer:** While some advice on internship cover letters encourages students to discuss how the internship will benefit you, be careful about overemphasizing this. Your letter should be mostly about what you can do for the employer and how you can do the work that they have advertised. Be authentic and specific when you write about why you are interested in the position and working for the company.
5. **Format your letter with key information:** Be sure to include your name, address, email address and telephone number on your cover letter. The letter should be single spaced and use a professional format. Also make sure you save your cover letter as a pdf and name the file in a way that is specific to you, such as: AlisonYoung_Letter.pdf. Double check that your contact information is accurate, because you won't get contacted for an interview if there is a typo in your telephone number or email address.
6. **Be sure to mention you will be living in D.C.:** Washington internships are competitive and you will be going up against many students who already live and go to school here. Hiring managers need to know that candidates are serious about relocating to D.C. – even if the internship is listed as being remote. Show them how serious you are by noting in your cover letter that you will be living in Washington for the semester and will be working in an internship as part of the Missouri School of Journalism's Washington Program.
7. **Seek feedback:** After you have your basic letter and resume in good shape, share them with the Washington Program director for any additional feedback.