Cover Letter for Internships-Guide

What does the cover letter do?
* It allows you to tell about your specific interest in the internship and the organization and why you want to work there. What is it about the organization’s service, product, or mission that attracts you to them and what do you want to learn during your internship?
* It allows you to highlight your most relevant skills for the internship/organization and give specific examples your experiences and how you have successfully used these skills.
* It separates you from all of the other applications if, after reading it, the reader thinks: he/she has taken the initiative to research us, he/she really is interested in working for our organization, he/she would be a good match for this internship and there are concrete examples of this person’s skills.
* It is your first impression. Any errors will probably end the chance for the position. The reader will wonder: if this applicant does not take the time to be accurate on documents as important as the letter and resume, will they be accurate in anything else?
* It should be one page long and should be in the ‘style’ of the organization—i.e. mimic the formality (or informality) of the organization.

The first paragraph(s) should include four things:
- Introduction: your class and major
- Identification of the internship you are interested in and how you found out about it (i.e. web posting, referral, internship office, etc.)
- Reasons that you are interested in working for this particular organization---this should be very specific so the reader knows you have researched the organization and have concrete reasons for wanting to work with them (vs. a mass mail out of resumes)
- What you hope to learn during the internship. Internships are part learning and part contributing and the site supervisor knows he/she will be sharing their time and expertise.

The second paragraph(s) should state how your course work/projects, activities, and experiences have developed skills that would help you in completing the internship and/or in making a contribution to the organization. Selecting two to three of the most related skills and explaining them in context will help the reader understand your skills and experience and also give them credibility. This should not just be a list of your skills listed on your resume.

HINT: To identify the skills required for the internship and the skills or traits valued by the organization, review the internship description, but also review the company’s mission and the skills and descriptions of their position descriptions for full-time positions. You’ll find things like team-oriented, customer service, global focus, etc.

The third paragraph should close the letter and indicate an appreciation of the review of materials and consideration for the internship, a statement about the next step(s) and include the best means of contacting you.

The cover letter is NOT:
* It is not just re-writing the internship description.
* It is not just a list of your skills.
* It is not a template that you can just tweak and send somewhere else; it has to be specific and personalized to the internship and organization.
* It should not include repetitive use of pronouns (i.e., I worked, I am experienced, etc.)

SOME ADVICE: If it is difficult for you to write the cover letter, to identify with the organization or the internship responsibilities or relate to the skills/traits they want, it may be a sign that you really don’t want this internship.