

**Cover Letter Guide for Internships**

A cover letter serves to explain why you have targeted a specific organization for an internship. It should describe how the work you would do for them aligns with both your abilities and interests. In order to be effective, you will want to research both the organization and the opportunity so you can convey how your qualifications match their needs within the context of the organization’s mission, strategy and any specific programs or projects.

For that reason, a cover letter should always be tailored to each organization and address the following points in three paragraphs:

* Who you are (your class and major)
* What you want to do (identify the specific internship and how you learned about it, i.e., online, faculty referral, internship office, personal contact, etc.)
* Why you want to intern with that particular organization
* How your academic, co-curricular, extra-curricular and other work experiences make you uniquely qualified for the opportunity
* What you hope to learn from the experience
* How you may be contacted for a phone or face-to-face interview

While that may sound ambitious, don’t make it harder than it is by adhering to the following guidelines.

**First Paragraph**

Immediately identify who you are and why you are reaching out to the organization. Include a statement that identifies what year you are in along with your major or area(s) of interest. Then indicate what opportunity you are applying for and how you learned about the internship.

Next, link your experience and interest to some aspect of the organization that you learned about through your research. This part is key and connects your particular interest in the organization with your ability to meet the needs of the internship. Ensure it’s a meaningful statement tailored specifically to this particular organization and serves to set up the next paragraph, which will contain supporting details of how you will contribute.

|  |
| --- |
| **NOTE:** It’s essential that you research each organization, opportunity and the site supervisor (if you know who that will be) where you plan to apply to ensure the internship will advance your knowledge and abilities, and enable you to describe how your experience will assist that organization in meeting its goals. This tactic helps an organization to know that you are sincerely interested in interning with them, as opposed to trying to secure an internship with just anyone. |

**Second Paragraph**

Highlight your experience by expounding on your academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences, along with any previous work or internships, and relate it directly to the kind of work you would do as an intern for that organization. Incorporate key words from the organization’s website and position description that reflect the skills, traits or values you possess to demonstrate how effective you will be in the role and the contributions you will be able to make. Most organizations know that students have limited experience so be selective and choose examples that are relevant to the organization, and quantify any outcomes that you have achieved. Also include what you hope to gain from the site supervisor to reinforce the internship as a learning opportunity and the investment of time and expertise they will make as well.

**Third Paragraph**

In closing, express your interest and appreciation for their time in considering you for the internship. Indicate your desire to speak with them at their earliest convenience, your availability and how you can best be reached. Ensure that whatever contact information you provide is both professional and accurate. Once you have sent your information, monitor your contact information closely so you may immediately respond to any inquiries you receive.

If you don’t hear from the organization after 1-2 business weeks of the application deadline, politely follow up and reiterate your level of interest and desire as well as your ability to make a contribution.

**The Do’s and Don’ts of Cover Letters**

*Do…*

* Formally address the letter or email to an individual using the proper spelling of their name and title.
* Use the salutation of *Internship Coordinator* or *To Whom It May Concern* if you are unable to get a specific name or title of the individual hiring for the internships.
* Make sure your cover letter does not exceed one page.
* Keep each paragraph to 3 or 4 well-written sentences that demonstrate your communication skills in addition to the other attributes and experience you share.
* Proofread your cover letter for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation and fix any typos.
* Use your Furman email address as the contact to legitimize your role as a student and the internship as a learning opportunity.

*Don’t…*

* Use a template – organizations will dismiss you for not specifically targeting them.
* Reiterate what’s contained in your resume – connect the pieces to explain why you are interested and demonstrate how you are uniquely qualified for the opportunity.
* List qualities because they appeared in the position description or on the organization’s website – state your knowledge, skills and abilities within the context of experience relevant to the organization.
* Repeat what’s contained in the position description or your resume – use that space to your advantage by addressing the internship and organizational needs through the lens of your experience, interest and goals.
* Start the majority of your sentences using first person pronouns (I, My, Mine, etc.).

|  |
| --- |
| **NOTE:** A cover letter should capture your passion and desire to work for an organization. If you’re struggling to find a way to align your experience and interests to a particular organization, consider whether it may not be the right opportunity for you. |

**Sample Cover Letter**

Today’s Date

Ms. Shelby Cohen

Community Relations Coordinator

Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District

301 University Ridge, Suite 4800

Greenville, SC 29601

Dear Ms. Cohen:

Please accept the enclosed resume in response to your posting for a part-time, summer intern with the Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District, which I learned about through Furman University’s internship database. As a sophomore majoring in Sustainability Science, I have had considerable research experience in environmental field studies, specifically conducting research in our school's outdoor laboratory to assess water levels and quality. I was attracted to your internship for the opportunity to combine my research skills with public education about conservation efforts.

Last summer, I worked as a conservation assistant for the Greenville Water Company in Greenville, South Carolina, examining water line maintenance and surveying flood plains for the Community Relations division. Part of my duties included compiling data, preparing a media kit, and delivering presentations to area employers on effective methods for collection of rain water and runoff for reuse. I received a special commendation from the division director for my attention to detail and ability to translate scientific data into language and concepts that were relevant to general audiences. Having completed coursework in *Sustainability and Society* and *Corporate Sustainability*, I am interested in augmenting my academic experience to learn more about soil conservation. With its long-standing commitment to water and soil conservation, I feel that my experience developing communication tools could assist Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District with their outreach efforts to educate communities about the need to treat both water and soil as commodities that we cannot afford to waste.

I welcome the chance to speak with you further about the needs of the internship and how my skills and experience may be a match for the position. Currently, I have availability during the afternoon on Mondays & Wednesdays after 2p, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 10a. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Diane Flinn

(Cell)201-464-6773

diane.flinn@furman.edu