

# Staring Down the Cover Letter



This cover letter is not going to write itself.



# First Step: Highlight Key Tasks in the Job Description

## Job Description for internship with Ed & Workforce Committee- Democrats

### Typical Intern Duties

Interns with the Education and the Workforce Committee Democrats perform a variety of tasks that support our staff in our legislative and media work. Legislative tasks may include legislative research, assembling information, assisting lead staff in the Committee hearing room, and attending hearings and markups of other Committees for the purpose of taking notes. (Our interns are also encouraged to attend other congressional hearings and meetings in which they may have a personal interest.) Media tasks may include helping organize and staff Committee press conferences and assisting with production of daily news clips relating to Committee issues. Interns also perform administrative duties, such as answering phones, and sorting and distributing mail.

## Step 2: Identify Your Relevant Skills & Experience

- Look at your resume and identify the key skills and experience that tie directly to the tasks or projects you highlighted in the job description.
- Pick the ones that demonstrate you will be able to “hit the ground running” and do those things from Day One.



Assume they are reading your resume.

Then the resume is the play-by-play and the cover letter is your highlight reel.

You don't need to restate everything that is in your resume. Just pull out the things that fit their job description best.



## **Step 3: Lay Out a 4-Paragraph Structure**

**TIP:**

**You can make a good case for yourself in 4 short paragraphs TOTAL.**

**The reader will appreciate you for keeping it brief & clear.**

# Paragraph 1: Why You Want to Work **THERE** and What You Are Bringing

## In the first paragraph:

- Make a personal connection to their mission, objectives, services, or focus and explain somewhere in that first paragraph why you want to be a part of **their** team in particular. You could have applied anywhere --- so why them? Remember, this is not about what this experience will do for you/your career. What will you contribute to them and their mission?
  - ✓ Do you know any alums at the org? Did you speak to anyone at the org that you should mention in this opening paragraph?
- This is where you can infuse a little of your personality by being genuine about your interest in what they do. And by telling them how your past experience(s) **show** you care about what they do, if it truly does. And mention 1-2 **skills** that you will be

## **First Paragraph continued...**

- If you have met someone from their organization or have talked with someone who interned there, tell them that and why that conversation made you want to work there, if it did.
- List one or two places you have interned/worked or activities or projects in just a few words that you will expand on in the next 2-3 paragraphs.
- Briefly mention or “name drop” a few skills that you will bring to the internship role and that you will expand on in the next 2-3 paragraphs.



- Your job is to make it easy for the person reading the letter to see why you are a great match for that role.
- Ask yourself what might make you stand out from the other people applying.



## Sample Opening Paragraph:

“Dear Hiring Manager:

I am a junior studying public policy with a demonstrated commitment to lifting families up who are struggling in poverty and I am excited to apply for your Social Media internship. My recent experience managing social media outreach for a Durham-based non-profit that links families to critical resources has prepared me to connect with CDF’s key audiences. Additionally, my strong writing skills and attention to detail will strengthen my contribution to the CDF Communications Team this summer.”

## **Middle Paragraphs (2-3 paragraphs max!)**

**This is where you pull out specific tasks, experiences and knowledge and link them to what you highlighted in their job description.**

- Cite and expand on specific experiences that connect with 1-2 tasks they listed in the job description. Don't just list that you did them but **tie your experiences back to the tasks they list**. And try not to cover more than two skills/relevant experiences per paragraph.
- If your experience and activities demonstrate a commitment to the work the organization does, explain that in a paragraph. Give one or two sentences that tell specifics about the work you did or the projects you were involved with that demonstrate that commitment.

## Start Each of these Middle Paragraphs with a Topic Sentence

- Start these explanatory paragraphs with a **Topic Sentence**. This sentence introduces the reader to what you will expand on for the rest of that paragraph. If the reader only skimmed the first sentence of each of your 4-5 paragraphs, when taken together they should make a cohesive picture of why you are a good fit for the internship/job.

## Example of a Topic Sentence

Instead of saying *“My time interning for the state legislature has prepared me for this role”*, be more specific:

*“Interning for my local state representative in Virginia, I learned to balance a range of tasks and make visiting constituents feel at home, skills that will help me contribute as a Congressional Intern in Representative Crawford’s office.”*



## **Final Paragraph:**

Two sentences will be plenty as you sign off.

**Summarize why you are a “good fit” and thank them for considering your application.**



**Before you hit “Send”!**  
Have someone else proofread it,  
no matter what hour it is.

Then, let the nap begin...

