

/ Public Interest Law Cover Letter Advice

Cover letters serve as an introduction to potential employers, highlight your skills, interests, and experience, and convey your writing style and writing ability. They should be one page and tailored to each employer and opportunity.

SUGGESTED FORMAT

First Paragraph: Identify who you are and why you are writing. Communicate that you understand the mission of the organization and the specific position that you are seeking. Give the reader a reason to want to finish the letter! Try to establish a connection between the organization and yourself that indicates that this is not a generic letter for just any job.

Body Paragraph(s): Establish your experience and qualifications to the employer. Highlight relevant qualifications, which are not on your resume, such as coursework, research, or a prior connection to the organization or the issues they work on. Public interest cover letters can be more personal than private sector ones so do not shy away from sharing your connections to the mission, the clients, the community, etc. When listing a broad skill (research, writing, etc.) that you possess, be sure to back it up with concrete examples.

Final Paragraph: Thank the reader for their consideration and time and tell them how to reach you. Offer to provide any additional application materials as needed. If not included in a header, tell the employer how they can contact you by stating your phone number and/or email address.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Poor formatting:** Be sure to pay attention to the placement and format of your address, the employer's, and the date. Include appropriate paragraph indentation, salutation, sign-off language. Check out our examples for guidance.
- **Typos, inaccuracies, misspelled names, etc.** Read your cover letter slowly from the beginning to check for spelling and grammatical errors. Have a friend, family member and/or your CSO proofread your letter as well.
- **Restating your resume.** Do not waste space with information that the employer can easily see on your resume. Instead, add context and more information to your listed experiences.
- **Generic reasons for interest in the employer.** Passion for the work is crucial and employers can tell if you're using boiler plate language. Do your research. Cite specific examples on why you want to work for this organization.
- **Focusing too much on what you stand to gain from the job.** Employers want candidates who can contribute to their work, not those who are only seeking to gain from them. Focus on how your skills and passion for the work will help the employer to further its mission and better

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July 29, 2019

Mary Jones
Legal Aid Society of North America
One Main Street,
New York, NY

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am a second-year law student at America Law School writing to apply for the internship position in the Family Law Unit. I am passionate about furthering the interests of individuals not afforded traditional access to the justice system, and I have devoted much of my education, work experience, and extracurricular activities to the area of family law and domestic violence. I am confident that the research, writing, and advocacy skills I have garnered in law school have well equipped me for this position.

I am committed to a career that serves victims of domestic violence, and I have already begun to achieve this goal by helping low-income families and children. Last summer, I was a student fellow at the America Legal Aid Bureau. As a student attorney, I was responsible for every stage of divorce, custody, and guardianship proceedings for low-income clients who were victims of domestic violence. In this role I successfully researched and utilized relevant case law, and drafted petitions for divorce, motions, and separation agreements for my clients. I also became confident while presenting arguments in the courtroom, and comfortable counseling clients. I successfully handled over ten complicated cases as a student attorney, and my greatest accomplishment was successfully proving during trial that my client was subjected to cruel and abusive treatment during marriage, and the judge ultimately granted the divorce in favor of my client.

Furthermore, through my volunteer work with the Safe House, a non-profit organization that provides holistic assistance to victims of domestic violence, I have learned more about the cycle of abuse and best practices to remove children and victims from their abusers. I participate in court advocacy projects that assist victims in obtaining orders of protection, and outreach initiatives to help spread information about what services are available. Through this work, I have gained a deep understanding and passion to serve this community, and believe an internship with your organization will allow me to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be an outstanding advocate for low-income victims of domestic violence in my future career.

I am committed to advancing the interests of the Legal Aid Society of North America in creative, effective ways through a summer internship, and I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss my interest in this position. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jane Doe