

Sample Cover Letter

Cover letters for purposes of externship applications are formal job applications. **They should be on heavy resume paper** (any office supply store will point it out for you) with a professional look. **A cover letter should be no longer than one page.** It must be **signed in ink**. Your cover letter is the first sample of your writing that a judge will see, so edit and proofread accordingly. A cover letter can be accomplished in three paragraphs. Here are some suggestions:

SARAH L. STUDENT
919 Albany Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90015
213/555-1234
Voicemail: 213/736-1234
Internet: Sarah.student@lls.edu

Date:

The Honorable Larry M. Loyola
United States District Court
Central District of California
312 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Externship Application

Dear Judge Loyola:

First paragraph note: the first paragraph identifies who you are and **clearly** states what you are applying for and **when**. It might look something like this:

I am a first year [or upper division or third year, if applicable] Loyola Law School student, and I am seeking an externship in your chambers [or *in the California Department of Corporations*, or *office of the District Attorney*, etc., if appropriate] for the summer (or Fall semester, etc.) of 20____, which begins in late May. My resume is enclosed for your review.

Second paragraph note: This paragraph is your chance to sell yourself or highlight any skills or experiences making you unique. We don't provide sample language here because it is important that you individualize your letter. It doesn't do any good to say something like "I think an externship will be a valuable experience." Of course it will, but the point is that you need to convince the judge or attorney to whom you are applying that **you will be a benefit to them**. You might consider including the following:

- (1) **Prior work experience:** Obviously legal experience is more compelling than non-legal experience. If you don't have legal experience, then point to non-legal experience, stressing the fact that you have a work ethic, understand the importance of thoroughness, pay attention to detail, did well in your legal writing course, etc.
- (2) **Completion of certain courses or exceptional grades:** As to upper division applicants, most judges prefer that you have completed a course in Evidence, and many federal judges appreciate the completion Constitutional Law II. If you are applying to specialized agencies such as the Dept. of Corporations, or the SEC, then it is helpful to point out that you have completed or will have completed relevant courses such as business association or securities regulation law. If you have an

impressive class rank, emphasize it. If you have an exceptional grade in evidence, or civil procedure, (or a high grade in criminal law or procedure if you are applying to an agency dealing with criminal law) you should mention those exceptional grades.

- (3) **Other activities that point to your initiative:** Supervising attorneys and judges look for students who are "self-starters" and work well independently without constant supervision. Did you establish or administer any programs in college or in your past life before law school (if indeed there is life before law school)? Are you active in any student associations in law school? Do you have an accounting or engineering background requiring precision and attention to detail? Any experience with writing or editing? Do you have any management experience in your background? You get the picture.

Third paragraph note: Here's where you ask for an interview and offer references and writing samples. Include or offer your transcript if you have one and if it works to your advantage. You also want to thank the judge or lawyer for considering you. It's usually a good idea to include a message number here, so you can be reached easily. The last paragraph might look like this:

I look forward to hearing from you and would appreciate an interview at your earliest convenience. A brief writing sample (and transcript, if appropriate) is/are enclosed. References are available upon request. You may reach me or leave a message anytime at _____, or I will follow up with you shortly. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours, (if your letter is **to a judge**, or "Very truly yours" if your letter is to an attorney other than a judge)

Sign your cover letter in ink after proofreading for typos!

Sarah L. Student

*Remember, the **suggested language is just a sample**. Be sure and revise it so that it suits your own particular style.