




Wesleyan University

Gordon Career Center

Cover Letter Guide

 860-685-2180  careercenter@wesleyan.edu  Boger Hall

 [wesleyan.joinhandshake.com](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wesleyan-joinhandshake)  [wesleyan.edu/careercenter](https://www.wesleyan.edu/careercenter)

*Cover Letter Guide Tips on Formatting and Content
with Sample Cover Letters*

Need Help Getting Started? Ready for Review? Schedule a drop-in appointment on Handshake or by calling the Gordon Career Center during business hours.

GORDON CAREER CENTER

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Getting Started

What is the Purpose of a Cover Letter?

A cover letter:

- Provides an opportunity to express your interest in the industry, organization, and position
- Enables you to highlight a few experiences that are relevant to the job and connect those experiences directly to the qualifications the employer is seeking
- Demonstrates your written communication skills
- Allows you to highlight any steps you have taken to research the company, such as speaking to current employees (Wesleyan alumni?), attending an information session on campus, or visiting the office
- Communicates a sense of your personality

Do Employers Read Cover Letters?

Yes, employers read cover letters. While some may not, it is always best to write your cover letter under the assumption that the employer will indeed read it -- and read it very carefully. An error on the letter, or a generic, “cut and paste” approach, could eject you from the applicant pool. Always have someone -- a Career Center Peer Career Advisor, your roommate, friend, family member -- review your cover letter before submitting.

How do I Start?

Employer Research: Carefully read the job description and highlight the key skills and qualifications they require. Research the organization to understand its culture and what makes it stand out from its competitors in order to identify additional qualifications not mentioned in the job posting, and also to affirm why you want to work for them (networking is very helpful with this research!). At this point, it helps to also have a solid understanding of why the employer’s *industry* fits your interests and skills.

Personal Review: Now identify your major accomplishments. From this list, identify two or three accomplishments that best match the skills and qualifications the employer is seeking. Write two or three paragraphs on these accomplishments using the STAR method (Situation + Task + Action + Result). You are not repeating your resume entries, but are crafting a more narrative, conversational (yet professional!) tone. This is an opportunity to express some energy, enthusiasm, and warmth to the reader beyond the factual structure of your resume.

Writing: Organize and format your cover letter using the samples in this document as guides. Keep in mind that with extensive job descriptions, it is not essential to address all the required qualifications. Select a few key responsibilities well matched to your abilities. Take advantage of the Gordon Career Center if you want help getting started or to have a draft of your cover letter reviewed by a Peer Career Advisor.

Cover Letter Check-List

Cover letters do not need to be approved by the Gordon Career Center, but we encourage you to schedule an appointment with a Peer Career Advisor to have it reviewed before submitting.

FORMAT:

- Cover letters should be on one page, one side, and single-spaced
- Font should be clear and readable, no smaller than pt. 11, and black. Use the same font style as was used on the resume. Do not include graphics, lines, or other colors.
- Margins should be no smaller than .5 on all sides of the page
- Do not indent paragraphs; use business format which is block style formatting
- Start with “Dear Mr./Ms. ___,” (if you don’t know the name of the recruiter, use “Dear Paralegal Hiring Manager” or “Dear Recruiting Team” or “Dear Intern Coordinator”. Avoid the impersonal, “To Whom it May Concern” or “Dear Sir/Madam”)
- Include your contact information (can use the header from your resume)
- Include the name and address of the organization
- Include your printed name at the end (can also include photo of your signature)

CONTENT:

- Your cover letter should be free from spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors – and typos! Please proofread!
- Demonstrate strong knowledge of the organization and tailor the cover letter to the specific job description (do not use a generic cover letter -- employers notice!)
- Clearly state the position you are applying for using the position title from the job description
- Watch your tone and style: express your personality, but avoid being humorous or overly familiar
- Emphasize what you will contribute to the organization, not what you will gain from working at the organization!
- Show, don’t tell. Merely stating, “I am a strong communicator” is less effective than providing concrete details, e.g., “I have experience tailoring my message to different audiences. For instance, I presented my senior thesis to professors who were experts in the subject, as well as other students and parents who were not knowledgeable in the content. This required me to balance simplicity with rich details.”

The following **Structural Guide** demonstrates the format and approach, followed by some sample letters. Please note that any sample letter should serve only as an example. Always use your own words and voice when composing your letters!

Additional Resources, if desired:

[Vault.com](#) has additional advice and sample cover letters.

[The Muse](#) has advice and sample letters.

Structural Guide

[can use same header as resume, with same font style and font size. Can be centered, or justified left]

Your Name [can capitalize]

Your Mailing Address, Phone Number, Email Address [can separate with bullets]

Date of Submission

Name of Contact, Title [e.g., Director of Marketing]

[address the letter to a specific person. Use “Hiring Manager” or “Internship Coordinator” if contact is unknown]

Address City, State ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr.: [contact’s last name only. Can use a colon or comma]

[cover letters should ideally be 3-4 paragraphs, left justified]

First paragraph: do not start with your name; we see it at the top and bottom of your letter. Nor do you need to start with your class year and major, which we learn from your resume. Rather, one way to start is to state the position you are applying for. Explain why you are interested in working at the organization, making sure it is specific to that organization, and talk about something that differentiates that organization from its competitors. Mention the name(s) of anyone you have spoken with at the organization and what interested you from that conversation (you can lead with this name if the person suggested you apply for the position). Provide one sentence on the key skills/qualifications you will bring to the organization that will make you excel as an intern/full-time employee.

Second paragraph: discuss your specific skills that align to the job description and make you a strong candidate. Provide two or three detailed examples of how you have developed and demonstrated the stated skills in your academic, professional, volunteer, or other experience. Show -- don’t tell -- here, providing concrete details! Relate the skill back to the job, explaining why that skill would be valuable to the employer. This is a good place to show your understanding of the industry and its culture.

Third paragraph: reference any additional, broader skills with the same intent as the second paragraph. Or, you can mention some demonstrable personal qualities that relate to the industry culture or nature of the work, e.g., strong work ethic, persistence, team spirit or willingness to go the extra mile. Best if you provide brief examples.

Final paragraph (can be rolled into the third paragraph, or a brief fourth paragraph): summarize the skills you will contribute and your interest in the position and fit with the industry. Mention how you can be reached [email] and/or [phone number]. Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[insert photo of your actual signature, or provide your typed signature]

Your Signature

Typed Name

John Doe, 45 Wyllys Avenue, WesBox 12345, Middletown, CT 06459

jdoe@wesleyan.edu • 860/729-1234

March 3, 2022

Christopher Davis, Campus Recruiter

The Brattle Group

44 Brattle Street, 10th Floor

Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Mr. Davis:

At the suggestion of my advisor, Professor Edward Stephens, I am writing to apply for the Summer 2022 Research Analyst internship position with the Cambridge office of the Brattle Group. As a junior majoring in economics and environmental studies, I am intrigued by The Brattle Group's academic culture, network of industry experts, and strengths in economic consulting across a variety of industries, especially in the energy sector. My professional motivation and ability in research and quantitative analysis will contribute to my success as a Summer Analyst.

Relevant to the position, this past summer I had the opportunity to work with Professor Yohe as a Research Apprentice through the Wesleyan Quantitative Analysis Center (QAC) summer program. Under Professor Yohe's guidance, I constructed models of risk associated with climate change impacts for multiple scenarios, which have yielded results about which I am currently writing a paper for publication. Through the program, I gained experience in quantitative modeling and statistical analysis using Stata, SAS, R, and SPSS, and, based on my demonstrated capability, was selected to continue as a student tutor for the QAC during the academic year, where I work independently and as part of a team to instruct students on statistical and research methods. As a testimony to my leadership skills and commitment to my community, I am actively involved in, and currently serve as chair of, the Wesleyan Committee for Investor Responsibility, a group consisting of students, faculty, administrators, and alumni to address issues of social and ethical responsibility in the University's investment policies.

I am confident that my skills and experience will enable me to positively contribute to The Brattle Group, and would welcome the opportunity to interview. Please find my resume and unofficial transcript enclosed with the application. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Jane Smith
45 Wyllys Avenue, WesBox 98765
Middletown, CT 06459
860/685-1234 • jsmith@wesleyan.edu

April 3, 2022

Jonathan Johnson, Manager
Company Name
123 Main Street, Suite 987
Anytown, CT 06002

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I write to express my deep interest in the Research Intern position at Company Name. I find the challenge of identifying strategies to manufacture and distribute widgets in complex economic circumstances fascinating, and I admire Company Name's culture and strategy of leveraging the story told by relevant data to make important business recommendations. This summer, I wish to work in support of your cutting-edge work through research and analysis.

As a Research Assistant at Wesleyan University, I collected data from over 1,000 sources to identify customer's methods of usage and satisfaction level with widgets. As a result, our team found that customers with the highest level of satisfaction were located in warm climates. We recommended that the marketing team create a specific campaign to attract a broader customer segment, specifically in colder climates. That recommendation was adopted and is in the process of being implemented.

As the Events Coordinator for the Wesleyan SoAndSew Club, I co-organized our annual 24- hour sewing competition. The objective was to create curtains and linens to be sold to residents of Middletown's North End, a lower income area of town. I partnered with local businesses to organize the event, collect donated materials and allocate supplies – including snacks and beverages. Due to our efforts and the help of 40 volunteers, we were able to produce attractive products, and raise \$2,000 for the local food bank. The Director of the local food bank said that my "ability to manage time well and motivate the entire team contributed to our success."

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss my skills and qualifications as they relate to the Research Intern position. I can be reached at (860) 685-1234 and jsmith@wesleyan.edu. Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

John Murphy, 45 Wyllys Avenue, WesBox 45454, Middletown, CT 06459

jmurphy@wesleyan.edu, 860.555.1234

March 1, 2012

Ms. June Angelis, Intern Coordinator

The James Gallery

106 North 8th Street

New York, NY 01234

Dear Ms. Angelis,

Artistic creation and exhibition have always been central to my life. My parents and brothers are artists and their works consist of drawings, sculptures, paintings and murals. We have always decorated our home with images and sculpture and, as a result, my family's artistic values became my passions. I came to praise all forms of creative expression and found peace in writing and playing the violin. It is with this passion that I apply for the Program Intern position at The James Gallery.

I am a junior at Wesleyan University majoring in sociology and Hispanic literatures and cultures. In many of my courses that explore social theory and cultural movements throughout history, artistic expression and the role of the artist to society is central to understanding the socioeconomic and political background of a given community. Through different media, cultural knowledge is transmitted and leaves an open space for interpretation, giving rise to the possibility of endless meaning and symbolic value to the viewer. The integration of the public and the artists at James excites me as I believe in co-creation between the artist and spectator. The public has the potential to influence creation so that the once-private visions of artists can transcend boundaries and become part of something much larger.

As a Student Manager Intern and Events Assistant at Wesleyan's Student Center, I developed relevant organizational and marketing experience while overseeing a student staff of 10, managing logistics of conferences and events for up to 200 attendees as well as organizing and publicizing events centered on building community. Working as a Program Intern for The James Gallery would enable me to actively apply my relevant skills and contribute to organizing and marketing large scale projects for artists and writers.

I look forward to discussing my skills and qualifications with you. I can be reached at 860.555.1234 or jmurphy@wesleyan.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

All the best,

John Murphy

Rachel D. Brown
45 Wyllys Avenue, WesBox 99999
Middletown, CT 06459
rdbrown@wesleyan.edu 860/555-9876

March 23, 2022

John Batesman, Director of Recruitment
DreamTV
1 Universal Drive
Anytown, CA 91234

Dear Mr. Batesman,

Chris Sullivan, your classmate at Wesleyan, suggested I apply to the internship at DreamTV. The summer program is a great fit with my interest in the entertainment industry. I was attracted by how the internship allows students to have hands-on responsibilities in production, from researching news reports to handling set equipment. In addition to my strong interest in the field, my skills in media production and communication -- outlined on my resume -- make me a strong candidate for the position.

Participating in theater or film production has always been a significant part of my activities. I have been involved in high school and local theater productions which encouraged me to continue to participate in production activities at Wesleyan. Through various production experiences, I have not only learned how to handle basic filming equipment, but also to use the tools to maximize the message of the production.

Additionally, I gained effective communication skills by being a Peer Career Advisor on campus. I worked effectively with diverse populations and became a more open communicator. I also learned how to work competently within a rigid time frame. I became proficient in providing accurate and constructive feedback to others which has prepared me to work in a high-pressured and creative environment such as that of DreamTV.

I look forward to speaking with you in person to further discuss my relevant skills and experiences. I can be reached at 860/555-9876 or rdbrown@wesleyan.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel D. Brown

Edward Jones 45 Wyllys Avenue, WesBox 11111, Middletown, CT 06459

999-999-9999 • ejones@wesleyan.edu

March 23, 2022

Dorothy Davis, Manager of Recruitment

Next Best Thing Network

1 Universal Drive Anytown, CA 91234

Dear Ms. Davis:

The Next Best Thing Network Marketing Internship is a perfect fit with my career goals! I am very interested in exploring the world of entertainment marketing and with its innovative approach and deep impact on reality television, I can think of no better place to work than with the Next Best Thing team. As you can see from my attached resume, my current and past jobs, as well as my extracurricular activities, have given me the skills necessary to flourish in this internship.

I have gained experience in marketing through helping to organize a 300-person charity gala for the non-profit organization Asian American Family Services. I designed the logo, invitations and marketing materials as well as assisted in making cold calls and meeting with potential donors to discuss the organization and the benefits of giving to us. I am an energetic self-starter: at sixteen, I started my own jewelry company, Goddess Jewelry, to sell my own pieces. I love to work with people, and through my job at Wesleyan as a tour guide, I have learned to express my position while also thinking and responding quickly to an audience.

I am extremely eager to further explore entertainment marketing, as I am a pop-culture fanatic with a passion for television and media, and am planning on a career in marketing. The Next Best Thing has deeply influenced the realm of reality television today; aside from programs where audiences get to experience the lives of others, your team has introduced an entire genre of highly skilled competitive reality shows, like Kitchen Creation (my personal favorite!) that have been imitated by countless other networks. The world of media changes every day, and we live in an increasingly digital world – I am eager to contribute to Next Best Thing's viral outreach. Learning about entertainment marketing from a network as visionary as yours would be a dream come true.

I look forward to speaking with you in person to further discuss my relevant skills and experiences. I can easily be reached by phone or by email (see header above). I will contact you at the end of next week to verify receipt of my application and to discuss the possibility of setting up an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward Jones