



Washington University School of Law
CAREER CENTER

Cover Letter Guide



EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

The goal of a cover letter is to persuade the employer to read your resume and extend an invitation to interview. Cover letters are formal business correspondence and should be formatted as business letters. A well-written cover letter will use action verbs and varied adjectives, will avoid overuse of the word “I,” and will be free of grammatical and spelling errors. Have a friend or a strategist in the Career Center read your cover letter before sending it to employers.

Regardless of your prior work history, **your cover letter should not exceed one page**. Your resume and cover letter should match in terms of format (font, margins, etc.) and complement each other without being repetitive.

An effective legal cover letter will:

Introduce yourself to the employer: The first paragraph of your letter should identify your graduation year (*i.e.*, “Class of 2023” or “second-year student”) and law school and state the position you are seeking (*i.e.*, summer associate, judicial law clerk). For example:

“I am a second-year student at Washington University School of Law, and I am writing to apply for a summer associate position at Lowenstein & Jackson for summer 2023.”

“I am a first-year student at Washington University School of Law and am seeking a 2023 summer legal internship at Chicago Legal Aid.”

Establish a geographic connection to the employer: State any ties you have to the employer’s location. This is typically included in the first paragraph of your cover letter. If you do not have any ties to the area, state your commitment to practice in that location during the summer and following graduation. For example:

“I am committed to remaining in St. Louis following law school.”

“I completed my undergraduate degree in Miami and look forward to returning next summer and following graduation from law school.”

“I am committed to practicing in Los Angeles following graduation. I will be in the city from July 21st through July 23rd and would appreciate the opportunity to meet.”

If you are applying to multiple offices of the same firm, note the other offices where you are applying. For example:

“I grew up outside of Boston and look forward to practicing in New England following graduation. In addition to your Boston office, I am applying to your Providence, Manchester, and Bangor offices.”

“I am open geographically and am applying to your Los Angeles, Denver, and Miami offices.”

Express genuine interest in the particular employer: Research the employer before drafting a cover letter. At a minimum, review the employer’s website, [Martindale-Hubbell](#), the firm’s [US News Rankings](#) page, and/or the [NALP Directory](#) form (if applicable). Based on your research, draft tailored language that

shows you have researched the organization and are interested in the organization for a specific reason. For public interest employers, it is important to show that you identify with the employer's mission. For example:

"I am particularly interested in Lowenstein & Jackson because of its highly regarded trusts and estates practice."

"Your organization's mission of providing tax representation to low-income individuals aligns with my interest in tax law and my commitment to pursuing a public interest career."

Highlight your relevant skills and abilities: A cover letter should not simply reiterate what is already stated on your resume. Your cover letter should identify the skills, abilities, and traits you possess that will benefit the organization and allow you to succeed in the position you are seeking. Provide examples from your experience as evidence of these skills, abilities, and traits. For example:

"My attention to detail helped me excel in my legal writing class where I received the highest grade in my section."

"I believe my strong work ethic will enable me to provide high-quality work on tight deadlines. This past semester, I achieved a 3.85 GPA while taking a full course load and working 20 hours a week."

"My role as a judicial intern allowed me to hone my legal research and writing skills by analyzing case law and preparing legal memoranda."

Remain positive in your cover letter. Avoid statements that are negative, apologetic, or defensive.

Thank the employer and invite follow-up: The last paragraph of your cover letter should thank the reader for his/her time, and invite follow-up. If you will be in town on specific dates, note those dates for possible meetings. For example:

"Thank you in advance for considering my application. I will be in the Los Angeles area several times throughout the summer and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person. I look forward to hearing from you."

If you do not receive an initial response, it is acceptable to follow up with employers. Your phone call or email may be the reminder they need to move forward.

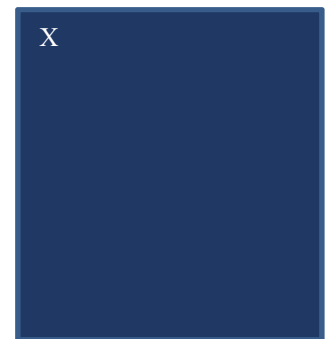
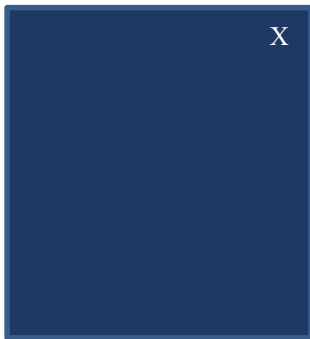
For your records, email yourself a copy of each cover letter you send to employers. Remember to update your cover letters routinely as you progress through law school and your summer internships.

The Career Center provides sample cover letters at the end of this guide, but you should not copy the language in these letters. Your experience will be unique. Be distinctive! Emphasize what makes you uniquely qualified.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

When you are submitting your cover letter in person or bringing it to an interview, print your cover letter on the same paper as your resume.

Your Name and Address: Your name, address, phone number, and email address should appear as a header at the top of the page, and it should match your resume's header. If you wish to indicate your preferred pronouns, do so here. You should use the same contact information format that is on your resume. If you are applying for a position in St. Louis, be sure to include your local address. If you are applying for a position in your hometown, include your permanent address to establish a solid connection to the location. Place your name and contact information in one of these three locations:



Date: The letter should be dated above the address block of the recipient (generally centered on the page or left-justified).

Employer Address: The address block should be left-justified and formatted as follows:

Individual Name
Title (where available)
Name of Employer
Address
City, State Zip Code

The Salutation: Cover letters should always be addressed to an individual. Do not use “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” Research the organization’s website and the NALP Directory to identify the appropriate addressee. If you have trouble finding the correct addressee, contact the Career Center for assistance. Use Mr. or Ms. Do not use Mrs. or Miss. Use a colon (not a comma) for business correspondence. For example:

“Dear Mr. Smith:”
“Dear Ms. Zimmerman:”

Your Closing: Use professional closing phrases. For example:

“Sincerely”
“Respectfully”

Signature: If mailing a cover letter, sign it in blue or black ink and type your name under your signature. If sending a cover letter electronically (either by email or upload), type your name in the appropriate signature spot. You may include “/s/” before your typed signature. For example:

Respectfully,	or	Sincerely,
<i>Doug Winchell</i>		/s/ Doug Winchell
Doug Winchell		Doug Winchell

The closing and signature should be left-justified or tabbed to the right margin.

Enclosures: Your cover letter will include a resume as an enclosure, but may also include a transcript, writing sample or other materials required by the employer. After your typed signature, use “Enclosure”, “Enc.” or “Encl.” if you are enclosing only one additional item. Use “Enclosures,” “Encs.” or “Encls.”, if you are attaching two or more.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
Phone Number
Email address
Pronouns

Date

Contact Name
Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Surname:

Body (3-4 paragraphs)

Sincerely,

/s/ Your Name

Your Name

Enclosure

Your Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
Phone Number
Email address

Date

Contact Name
Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Surname:

Body (3-4 paragraphs)

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Name

Encl.

Anne M. Walsh

2455 Waterman Blvd. Apt #1
St. Louis, MO 63108
annewalsh@wustl.edu
(903) 555-0055
she/her

December 10, 2022

Mr. John Markerson
Legal Recruiting Manager
Chicago Legal Clinic
2928 East 91st Street
Chicago, Illinois 60617

Dear Mr. Markerson:

I am a first-year student at Washington University School of Law, and I am writing to apply for an internship with Chicago Legal Clinic for the summer of 2023. I have extensive family ties in the Chicago area and plan to practice in Chicago following law school. I hope to pursue a career in public interest, serving those of greatest need, and I am inspired by your mission of providing community-based legal services to the underserved as a means of promoting justice.

My prior experience and academic coursework have given me the skills and practical abilities necessary to make a meaningful impact as a summer intern in your office. My work experience has provided many opportunities to develop and enhance my research, writing and communication skills. As a paralegal for Portman & Wayne, I participated in discovery and trial preparation for personal injury defense cases. In this role, I was responsible for case law research regarding California personal injury protection coverage and drafting legal briefs. My work as a public interest fellow at the ACLU sparked my desire to attend law school and pursue a public interest career, but also provided the opportunity to write high level reports on pressing criminal justice issues and to enhance my interpersonal and communication skills through client intake and community outreach work. In addition, as a research assistant at Pepperdine, I was responsible for extensive research and statistical modeling regarding terrorist activity. This project required that I synthesize and analyze large amounts of data to determine and predict patterns and present my findings in a written report and oral presentation. With respect to my academic studies, I graduated with honors from Pepperdine University and have excelled in my first semester legal coursework at Washington University School of Law.

I am confident that my background, experience, and commitment to public service will enable me to succeed as an intern with Chicago Legal Clinic. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/ Anne M. Walsh

Anne M. Walsh

Encl.

Carl Weathers

2341 Delmar Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-555-5555
carl.weathers@wustl.edu
Pronouns: he/him

December 1, 2022

Ms. Jane Adams
Recruiting Manager
Mason, Smith & Hayes LLP
1589 West Third Street
Memphis, Tennessee 38018

Dear Ms. Adams:

I am a first-year student at Washington University School of Law, and I am seeking a summer legal internship with Mason, Smith & Hayes. I am from Memphis and am committed to returning to the area this summer and following graduation. I am specifically interested in your firm because of its highly regarded commercial litigation practice.

I am confident that my strong work ethic, experience and eagerness to learn will allow me to make a positive contribution to your firm. Through my experience as a waiter and dishwasher at Roma's Diner, I developed strong interpersonal and problem solving skills. In the fast-paced restaurant setting, it was necessary to assess, analyze, and solve disagreements between colleagues and customers while remaining positive and proactive. As a camp counselor for the YMCA, I was given increasing responsibilities each summer as a result of my hard work and dedication. Eventually I assumed a leadership role, mentoring junior counselors and developing camp curriculum and activities. In addition to my work experience, my academic coursework has given me the opportunity to develop my research and writing capabilities. At Bowdoin College, I researched and authored an undergraduate thesis examining bureaucratic authoritarianism in Argentina, and during my first semester of law school, I have excelled in my legal research and writing course.

Enclosed please find a copy of my resume. Thank you for considering my application. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Respectfully,

Carl Weathers

Carl Weathers

Encl.

Elizabeth Kim
ekim@wulaw.wustl.edu
Pronouns: ze / zir

School:
123 Delmar Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63102
(314) 963-6161

Permanent:
1403 Pleasant Way
Sarasota, FL 34236
(941) 322-4665

January 3, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Wapner
United States District Court
Southern District of Florida
U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse
299 East Broward Boulevard, Room 103-A
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

Dear Judge Wapner:

I am a first-year student at Washington University School of Law, and I am writing to apply for an internship position in your chambers for the summer of 2023. A judicial internship in your chambers would be an excellent opportunity for me to continue to develop my research and writing skills and to acquire first-hand exposure to the litigation process. I am from Florida and look forward to returning next summer and after graduation.

My work and academic experiences have provided me with opportunities to develop and hone my research and writing skills. Prior to law school, I worked as a legal intern at the Law Offices of Michael Collins, where I conducted legal research and gained experience filing court documents. As a political science major at Northwestern, I strengthened my research and writing skills while working on my undergraduate thesis, which compared voter registration in urban and rural communities. Additionally, as a reporter for the *Northwestern News*, I gained experience writing efficiently in a fast-paced environment while meeting strict deadlines. During my first semester at Washington University, I received an A in my legal research and writing course.

My resume and writing sample are enclosed. I am available by telephone or video conference and would also be available to meet in person January 4th through January 10th. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

/s/ Elizabeth Kim

Elizabeth Kim

Encls.

Lauren Bacall

9823 Delmar Avenue, Apt. 3
St. Louis, MO 63130
(314) 555-5500
laurenbacall@wustl.edu

June 15, 2022

Ms. Jane Smith, Esq.
Director of Legal Recruiting
Marsh, Lowe & Jennings LLP
101 South 45th Avenue, Suite 340
New York, New York 10010

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am rising 2L at Washington University School of Law, and I am writing to apply for a summer associate position at Marsh, Lowe & Jennings for the summer of 2022. I plan to practice in the New York area following graduation, and I am particularly interested in your firm because of your highly regarded and diverse corporate law practice.

Through my prior work experience, I have developed strong research and writing skills that will enable me to make an immediate and positive contribution as a summer associate at Marsh, Lowe & Jennings. This summer I am working as a legal intern for the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). In this role, I have gained exposure to the rules governing the broker-dealer industry, participated in investigations and enforcement actions against violating firms and brokers, and honed my legal research and writing skills by drafting memoranda analyzing and applying FINRA rules. As a research intern for Global Treks and Adventures, I had the opportunity to research and write an article on women's rights issues in Central America, with my project culminating in the publication of my article. In addition, through my position as a writing center consultant, I developed strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to tailor presentations and communications to accommodate unique audiences and to collaborate with a diverse group of peers.

My strong work ethic is evidenced by my academic success. I graduated *magna cum laude* from American University, and my thesis received high honors. I have also excelled in law school, finishing my first year in law school at the University of Missouri with a 3.79 GPA, placing me in the top 1/3 of my class. My strong academic performance enabled me to transfer to Washington University, where I was recently invited to join the *Global Studies Law Review* as a Staff Editor.

I will be in the New York area on July 7th and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person. Additionally, I will be applying to your firm through Washington University's OCI program. I strongly believe that my enthusiasm, experience, and academic success will be a benefit to your firm and the summer program. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Lauren Bacall

Lauren Bacall

Thomas Cruise

3567 Forsyth, Apt 4D
St. Louis, MO 63130
314-550-0055
tcruise@wustl.edu

June 21, 2022

Mr. John Craft
Senior Recruiting Coordinator
Delaney & Wright, LLP
1551 M Street, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Craft:

I am a rising second-year student at Washington University School of Law and am interested in a 2023 summer associate position with Delaney & Wright. I am attracted to your firm's global presence and strong consumer products litigation practice; however, I would welcome the opportunity to gain experience in any practice area. Having spent several years after college in Washington, D.C., I have strong ties to the mid-Atlantic region and plan to return next summer and following graduation. In addition to your Washington, D.C. office, I am also applying to your Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York offices.

I am confident that my experience and enthusiasm will be a benefit to your firm. This summer, as an intern at the St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office, I have the opportunity to enhance my legal research and drafting skills by preparing research memoranda and pretrial motions. In addition, through second chairing a robbery trial later this summer, I will acquire a practical perspective on courtroom practice and custom, and learn first-hand the preparation needed to try cases. Prior to entering law school, I was a fourth grade teacher in Washington, D.C. In this role, I developed strong organizational and interpersonal skills. Parent-teacher conferences required effective and careful communication with people from varied backgrounds, and the training sessions I presented helped me to become a confident public speaker.

In addition to my work experience, I am proud of my strong academic record. I graduated *summa cum laude* from Bellarmine University, while serving as captain of the varsity tennis team. At Washington University, I have excelled in my coursework and was chosen to participate in the Appellate Clinic for my 2L spring semester. Further, I was selected as a staff editor for the *Washington University Law Review*.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions or need any additional materials, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

/s/ Thomas Cruise

Thomas Cruise

Encl.

Percy Jackson

percyjackson@wustl.edu | they/them/their

School Address:

222 Lordshill
St. Louis, MO 63119
(314) 550-0055

Permanent Address:

89 Kettering Drive
Corona, CA 92877
(951) 230-0011

June 16, 2022

Ms. Emily Kramer
Office Administrator
California Immigrant Aid Project
31 South Main Street
Riverside, CA 92503

Dear Ms. Kramer:

I am a rising second-year student at Washington University School of Law and am writing to express interest in a summer internship with the California Immigrant Aid Project for the summer of 2023. I am originally from Corona, California and intend to return to California next summer and following graduation. My goal is to work for a public interest organization providing legal services to disadvantaged communities. I am inspired by your mission of ensuring that immigrants in your community have access to competent and compassionate legal representation and would be honored to work in your office next summer.

My dedication to a career as a public interest attorney began through my volunteer activities at Tufts University. Throughout my undergraduate career, I dedicated five hours each week to service at the Jackson Mann Community Center, where I was responsible for providing after-school programming for elementary school students from low income households. I have continued my dedication to service in law school. This summer, as a legal intern at Legal Services of Eastern Missouri in the elder law division, I work with low income elderly residents to address a variety of legal issues, including access to housing, healthcare and benefits. In this role, I have had the opportunity to practice my legal research and writing skills by analyzing relevant statutes and case law regarding housing benefits eligibility and applying the law to the unique facts of each case. I have also honed my communication skills through my client intake duties, which require actively listening to each client's story and then effectively communicating next steps to address pending legal issues.

In the fall semester, I am excited to participate in the Immigration Law Clinic at Washington University, where I will have the opportunity to provide legal representation to the St. Louis immigrant population. I am also proud of my academic accomplishments. I graduated with honors from Tufts University, and my GPA at Washington University places me in the top 25% of my class.

I am confident that my background, experience and commitment to public service will enable me to make a positive and meaningful contribution to your office and mission. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Percy Jackson

Percy Jackson

Encl.

Steven Tyler

111 Walk This Way Lane, Lexington, KY 44052 | (314) 867-5309 | styler@wustl.edu | he/him/his

September 2, 2022

Ms. Janet Smith
Director of Recruiting
McKenzie & Jones, LLP
1234 Pine Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a third-year student at Washington University School of Law writing to apply for an entry-level associate position with McKenzie & Jones, LLP following graduation in May 2023. I am originally from Lexington, Kentucky and look forward to returning to my home state following graduation. Specifically, I am interested in working in a mid-sized firm where new associates are given significant responsibility early on in their careers, and I know that McKenzie & Jones offers that opportunity.

This past summer, my interest in litigation was confirmed by the valuable hands-on experience I gained working at the St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office as a Rule 13 Certified intern. Through this internship, I had the opportunity to second chair a robbery trial and to conduct depositions in a felony assault case. Assisting prosecutors with their work helped me to understand the vital role that defense counsel plays in ensuring that their clients receive a fair trial, and I would be thrilled to work with the experienced attorneys in your criminal defense practice. In addition, during my 1L summer, I worked as a legal intern at Smith, Grant & Kim in Reno, Nevada. This internship allowed me to develop my research and writing skills through extensive drafting of motions and pleadings in connection with a large class action lawsuit. I also enjoyed this civil litigation experience and would be happy to work in your general commercial litigation practice. Further, prior to law school I was a music teacher through the Teach for America Program. Through this challenging, but rewarding, work, I developed my interpersonal skills and ability to connect with people from varied backgrounds. I am confident that these experiences, together with my academic coursework, have prepared me to make a positive contribution to your firm from my first day.

Thank you in advance for considering my qualifications. I will be in the Louisville area several times throughout the semester and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Very truly yours,

Steven Tyler

Steven Tyler

Enclosure

Sarah Jones

4147 Westwood Drive, St. Louis, MO 63123 | sjones@wustl.edu | 314-891-4099 | she/her

December 23, 2022

Lillian Evans
Director of Legal Recruitment
New York City Law Department
100 Church Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Evans:

I am a third-year student at Washington University School of Law, and I am writing to apply for a post-graduation entry-level attorney position with the New York City Law Department. I am dedicated to pursuing a career in government, and I look forward to returning home to New York City following graduation next May. I would be thrilled to be considered for open positions in any of your divisions, but as an aspiring litigator, I am particularly interest in your Special Federal Litigation and General Litigation divisions.

During my law school career, I have sought out coursework and experiences that will prepare me to make an immediate contribution as a new attorney. This past summer, I interned at the Law Offices of Tom Frank & Associates in Brooklyn, New York. I chose this position in order to gain civil litigation experience. As an intern, I was involved in all aspects of the discovery process, including writing and responding to requests for production and interrogatories, outlining and observing depositions, and participating in document review. This work built on the skills I developed during my 1L summer as a legal intern for the New York Attorney General where I conducted legal research and drafted memorandums, briefs and pleadings. This fall I worked as student attorney with the Appellate Clinic Washington University, which allowed me to further refine my research and drafting skills while working on an appeal pending before the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. In addition to my litigation-focused experience, I have also taken and excelled in a variety of courses that have prepared me to succeed as a litigator with the New York City Law Department, including Pre-Trial and Trial Practice and Procedure, Federal Courts, Appellate Litigation, and Remedies.

I have enclosed my resume for your consideration. Thank you in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Jones

Sarah Jones

Encl.