

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING
WE WILL START SOON**

Storytelling and Articulating Skills in Your Cover Letter

Facilitator:

Phil Miletic (he/him)



About me as a storyteller



- I love writing in general, but especially creative writing (although I believe all writing can be creative!)
- Favourite memory of my PhD in English at UW: retrofitting a 1930s radio to play digital recordings of a Gertrude Stein novel
- I enjoy playing RPG video games, particularly when I get to create narratives about my character in the game

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River. The University of Waterloo is on lands that are deeply connected to Indigenous peoples who have historically lived and who currently live in this territory. These groups include the Neutral, Anishinaabeg (Ah-nish-naw-bay) and Haudenosaunee (Ho-denoh-show-nee) peoples.



Territorial Acknowledgement



- [O:se Kenhionhata:tie Land Back Camp: Facebook, Instagram & Patreon](#)
- [Community group calling for Victoria Park name change: "The cities in the region need to stop celebrating colonialism and start celebrating Indigenous peoples...we're calling upon the community to start referring to it as Willow River Park."](#) Bangishimo, Co-Founder
- Buy Willow River Park Stickers [here](#) designed by [Western Sky Designs](#)
- Watch [Recollections & Imaginings](#) documentary: focused community memories and future ideas for the Kitchener Charles Street Terminal

Let's make this a safer space

Listen and learn from each other with respect

Participate in a way that works for you!

Make no assumptions

Remain respectful of others – we do not tolerate harmful behaviour in this space

Take what works for you, leave what does not work for you

HOW THIS WORKSHOP WILL WORK

- ✓ Use the chat at anytime to ask questions or make an observation. I am all for random interaction!
- ✓ Participation will be in the chat and is optional!
- ✓ Majority of activities are reflection-oriented. Have a pen and paper ready, not just to take notes but to engage in reflection.
- ✓ Q&A is at the end but always feel free to ask questions.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF IN THE CHAT

Degree, discipline, what you hope to get out of the workshop

Learning Goals

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

1. Understand how the job ad is a useful tool for brainstorming ideas for your cover letter
2. Identifying stories and evidence to include in your cover letter to connect to the employer and their needs
3. Consider using narrative approach in your cover letters
4. Implement unified organization in cover letters to increase the focus and readability of cover letters

What is a cover letter?

- An opportunity to connect yourself to the organization to which you're applying and demonstrate what you have to offer
- A persuasive piece of writing, like an essay, that complements your resume by adding further context and narration
- A chance to demonstrate your written communication skills

ANALYZING A JOB AD FOR A COVER LETTER

If possible, bring up a job ad you're interested in

A Job Posting Has Appeared! (sample ad)

1) What does the job ad reveal about the company?

How can I communicate my interest or make connections between my values and the employer's?

2) What are the requirements for this job?

What stories can I tell that highlight my unique qualifications and strengths for the role?

3) What are the responsibilities listed in this job ad?

What examples or evidence from my experiences can I include to support my claims and storytelling?



Research Beyond the Posting



Google News

Cover Letter Paragraphs

1. Introduction

- Establishes connection and communicates interest
- Provides an overview of your body paragraphs
- Optional narrative approach

2. Body Paragraphs

- Grouped by themes: Skills-based, Experience-based, Education-based, etc.

3. Conclusion

- Wraps everything up, maintaining that connection and interest

Writing the Introductory Paragraph

Consider the following:

- ❖ How would you like to introduce yourself?
- ❖ Why are you interested in this role or what motivated you to apply?
- ❖ Is there something about the organization you're interested in?
- ❖ What about you would you like them to know right away?

Introductory Paragraph

- **Thesis Statement Approach**

Template

What is your thesis statement? What are your claims?

My background in _____, my experience with

_____, and my skills in _____ and

_____ make me an ideal candidate.

What's missing from this example?

Dear Ms. Quraishi,

I am very excited about the possibility of joining the Software Engineering Unit of General Motors in the position of Junior Engineer as advertised on the GM website. Your tradition of innovative automotive engineering design and progressive product development is inspirational to developing professionals like myself.

From careers.yorku.ca

Using a narrative approach

A narrative approach can be a useful approach to thinking of how to start the cover letter beyond the customary “I am writing to apply to...”. A narrative approach in a cover letter can be:

- Anywhere between a couple of sentences to the whole introduction
- A story about certain values you are committed to in your career
- Your experiences at the employers’ networking events or takeaways from coffee chats with their employees
- Career aspirations and how the role supports working towards those aspirations
- So much more! Your narrative approach is the story you want to tell!

Narrative Approach Prompts

- ❖ What story reflects the interests you have in the company or role you're applying to?
- ❖ What motivations or inspirations were behind your career choices?
- ❖ What kind of meaningful work, or "impact," would you like to do in your career?
- ❖ Do you share the company values? If yes, how so?
- ❖ How might this job be the next step in your career path?
- ❖ How might your interests, motivations, and/or values contribute to the team?

A Narrative Approach Example

Dear Hiring Manager:

My focus on developing and executing analysis-driven online marketing plans enabled my previous employer to enjoy a 25% sales growth in one year. I am excited about the opportunity to do the same for Amazon in the role of Senior Marketing Manager, Sports & Outdoors. From my six informational interviews with current Amazonians, and from what I learned at the Foster Meet-the Firm session, I believe that I can hit the ground running and immediately deliver results in your fast-paced environment.

From <https://foster.uw.edu>

**REFLECT: WHAT MIGHT YOUR NARRATIVE
APPROACH BE?**

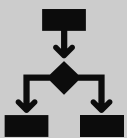
Body Paragraph(s)



Begins with a clear topic sentence and is “unified” throughout the paragraph, letting the reader know exactly what this paragraph is about



Skills-Based Paragraph: One/Two skills across multiple experiences



Experience/Project-based Paragraph: One experience that demonstrates multiple skills

Body Paragraph(s)

Consider the following :

- ❖ What stories will be strongest in proving your suitability for this job?
- ❖ How can you provide evidence, rather than making a list of unsubstantiated claims?
- ❖ How can you incorporate multiple skills of relevance into your examples?
- ❖ How can you make connections between your evidence and the job description to best demonstrate your fit?

ACTIVITY: THINK OF A STORY YOU'D LIKE TO TELL

Can be about a specific skill, a skill set, your education, or about an experience!

Activity Prompts

- ❖ Think of a story you want to share
- ❖ What skills did you use in this experience? And how?
- ❖ What was the outcome/result?
- ❖ Think of a topic sentence to introduce this story

Concluding Paragraph

Consider the following questions to ensure your letter is complete:

- ❖ Why are you interested in this line of work/company/role?
- ❖ In summary, what is it that you bring to this position/organization?
- ❖ Discuss application further in an interview
- ❖ Thank you

FAQ:

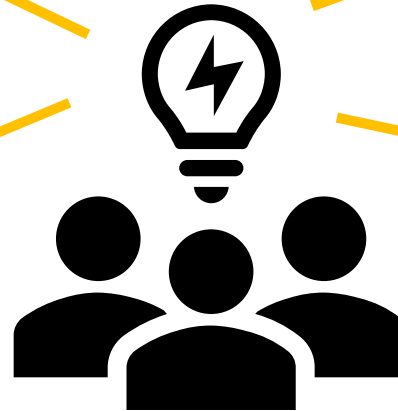
IS IT POSSIBLE TO CREATE A GENERAL COVER LETTER? I HAVE A LOT OF APPS TO APPLY TO!

Refine Your Cover Letter

Collect feedback from trusted friends, peers, mentors, supervisors

Check out other people's cover letter

(what do you like, what do you not like)



Talk with a Career Advisor

Visit Writing and Communication Centre

Key Takeaways for Today

1. A job ad offers clues and ideas of how to make connections to the employer
2. A cover letter is about making connections and telling stories (however little) that expand on details in your resume
3. Storytelling in cover letters gives you concrete examples and provides opportunities to connect with the employer via interest, values, or career goals
4. Cover letters can't "cover" everything! Selective focus and careful organization give depth and evidence that your resume can't really provide
5. Get help from others



**Regular
Co-op
Undergrad
Masters, PhD, Postdocs
Alumni
Employees**



**Job Search Tactics
Résumé
Cover Letter
Interview Prep
Career Exploration
Grad School Prep**



**Individual Appointments
Drop-ins
Workshops
Online Resources**

uwaterloo.ca/career-action

Online Resource

The screenshot shows the CareerHub website interface. At the top left is the 'CareerHub' logo, and at the top right is a yellow 'LOG IN' button. The main heading is 'CareerHub' with a logo, followed by 'Log in to get started'. Below this is a paragraph: 'Take the next step towards planning for your future by logging into the CareerHub (instructions below). If you're not sure where to begin, try starting with the Decision-Making section.' The central area features a blue briefcase icon with the text: 'Résumés, Cover letters, ePortfolios, job interviews, Academic job applications and interviews, and Negotiating job offers'. Surrounding this central text are six circular icons: 'MY DEGREE & SKILLS' (graduation cap), 'DECISION MAKING' (crossed arrows), 'FURTHER EDUCATION' (classical building), 'SELF-MARKETING' (key), 'SUCCESS AT WORK' (briefcase), and 'WORK: FIND/CREATE' (padlock). A white box labeled 'Apply/Interview' is positioned over the 'SELF-MARKETING' icon.

HOW DID WE DO?

We are always looking for ways to improve and your feedback is important. Complete the feedback survey delivered to your inbox at the end of this week.

Our mission is to educate and motivate all members of the University of Waterloo community to develop and take action to achieve current and future career goals.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO



Thank you!

CENTRE FOR CAREER ACTION