

## 5 Parts to a Cover Letter (a.k.a. How to Write a Good One!)

By Debra Wheatman, President – Careers Done Right  
(Edited Version)

**The Salutation** (The Hello): Get a name, any name. By hook or by crook try to get a name. Sometimes you can't – then try Dear Hiring Manager...

**The Opening** (The Grab): Your opening paragraph is your introduction and presents the reader with some immediate and focused information regarding the position you are pursuing and a **few core competencies** that demonstrate your strength---and your enthusiasm for the job.

**The Second Paragraph** (The Hook): This paragraph should define some examples of the work performed and results achieved. It should be connected to your resume. This does not mean you should copy verbatim what is in the resume. Rather, cover some key competencies that you feel define your success. In the event you are highlighting some information not contained in the resume (if you are switching careers, or have a unique value proposition), this is the perfect place to cover that information. Use bullets to define key areas of achievement and highlight the value you bring to the employer.

**The Third Paragraph** (Paragraph of Knowledge): Here demonstrate something you know about the company that prompted you to write. This shows the reader that you did some preliminary homework and understand the company's drivers, goals, values, etc.

**The Fourth Paragraph** (The Close): In the closing paragraph quickly summarize what you offer and close by either suggesting a meeting or indicating that you will call in a certain number of days. If you choose the latter approach, make sure you follow-up within the time frame you reference.

Sincerely,

Full Name  
Phone #

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### Cover Letter Tips

- Write the job title in the subject line of the email.
- Don't tell your "whole story". Include only relevant information.
- Make your letter accomplishment driven. Demonstrate your value to the employer.
- Show enthusiasm for the position.
- Include a "call to action".
- Use Spellcheck and have your letter reviewed by another set of eyes.

Dear Ms. Sanchez,

I was excited to learn about the opening for the Administrative Assistant Trainee position with John Smith & Associates. I recently obtained my Certificate in Business Administration, which provided me with a range of practical skills that I believe will meet the needs of this role.

While completing my studies, I worked part-time as a Customer Service Assistant for Target. My responsibilities in this role included providing face-to-face customer service and assisting on the floor with stock and visual merchandising. This position has given me key employability skills while also allowing me to experience working in a professional and fast-paced work environment.

With regard to my ability to meet the specific requirements of this job:

- **Customer Service:** Worked for four years in a retail environment, providing customer service at registers, and on the retail floor.
- **Reception duties:** Responsibilities included answering incoming phone calls and assisting customers with phone-based inquiries.
- **General Administration:** Certificate in Business Administration provided training in filing, data processing, records management and written communication.

In researching more about John Smith & Associates, I was impressed to learn that although it's a new organization, you are growing rapidly in the Bay area. I also value the fact that you donate 10% of your profits to local charities. This practice aligns with my values, and I would feel fortunate to part of your team.

I understand that you may receive a large number of applications for this role. However, I believe my skills, experience and enthusiasm make me a strong candidate. I have attached my resume, and look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications for the position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melinda Sawyer

**Your Name**  
**Your email**  
**Your phone number**  
**Hyperlink your LI profile (if you have one)**

## **Summary of Qualifications**

- Insert years of experience using your top skill
- Insert soft skills, and personal qualities unique to you
- Insert highlights from past jobs, school activities or volunteer gigs
- Insert languages spoken and/or written (if applicable)

## **Technical Skills**

List tech skills if applicable. Include level of expertise. **(include in summary or omit this section if tech skills are not above average)**

## **Education**

**Name of your high school or college, city and state**

*Name of degree or certification*

Year earned degree or certification (if you're still working on it, say in progress)

*Relevant Coursework*

Include your g.p.a. if it's outstanding

## **Work Experience**

**Name of last employer, city, state**

*Your job title*

Years employed at this company

- List as many **relevant** job duties & accomplishments as possible on the following lines
- Prioritize in order of use of highest skills
- Quantify when possible, and be specific
- Use action words and be descriptive

**(Use formatting above for additional jobs)**

## **Volunteer Experience**

**Name of organization, city and state**

*Job title of volunteer position*

Years worked there – from when to when

**Katarina Stephano**  
Katarinastephano@gmail.com  
510-337-7664

## **Summary of Qualifications**

- 5 years experience providing excellent customer service in a variety of settings
- Certified California Food Handler (2015)
- Experience catering for private parties – specialty is Brazilian food influenced by African culture
- Strong desire to work in the restaurant/hospitality industry
- Level headed, professional and hard-working
- Bilingual English/Portuguese

## **Education**

**Laney College, Oakland, CA** – ESL classes, 2016

## **Work Experience**

### **Uber, San Francisco Bay Area**

*Driver, 2016*

- Drove passengers daily from East Bay to SF International Airport & various other locations
- Kept vehicle neat and clean for passengers, always prioritizing safety
- Treated passengers with friendliness and respect

### **Self-employed, Oakland, CA**

*House Cleaner, 2009-2016*

- Cleaned homes for over 200 residential clients, garnering referrals from many satisfied clients
- Assisted with home organizing and moving
- Followed instructions and attended to detail requested by each client

*Catering Assistant for private clients, 2012-2014*

- Prepared food for parties and events, at least twice per month, often using my own recipes
- Assisted with set up and clean-up, prioritizing safety and cleanliness
- Interacted with guests in a friendly and professional manner

### **Berkeley YMCA, Berkeley, CA**

*Teacher's Assistant, 2008*

- Provided support for teachers in pre-school classroom, often diffusing behavioral issues
- Prepared and served lunches and snacks to 20+ children
- Interacted with children with patience and warmth

## **Volunteer Experience**

**Alameda County Food Bank, Oakland, CA** – Food Distributor, 2013

## BOSTON COLLEGE CAREER CENTER ~ ACTION VERBS

*Adapted, enlarged list inspired by Employment Development Department of Palo Alto, CA*

<b>Management skills</b>	<b>Communication skills</b>	<b>Clerical or detailed skills</b>
administered analyzed assigned attained chaired contracted consolidated coordinated delegated developed directed evaluated executed improved increased organized oversaw planned prioritized produced recommended reviewed scheduled strengthened supervised	addressed arbitrated arranged authored corresponded developed directed drafted edited enlisted formulated influenced interpreted lectured mediated moderated motivated negotiated persuaded promoted publicized reconciled recruited spoke translated wrote	approved arranged catalogued classified collected compiled dispatched executed generated implemented inspected monitored operated organized prepared organized prepared processed purchased recorded retrieved screened specified systematized tabulated validated
<b>Research skills</b>	<b>Technical skills</b>	<b>Teaching skills</b>
clarified collected critiqued diagnosed evaluated examined extracted identified inspected interpreted interviewed investigated organized reviewed summarized surveyed systematized	assembled built calculated computed designed devised engineered fabricated maintained operated overhauled programmed remodeled repair solved trained upgraded	adapted advised clarified coached communicated coordinated developed enabled encouraged evaluated explained facilitated guided informed initiated instructed persuaded set goals stimulated
<b>Financial skills</b>	<b>Creative skills</b>	<b>Helping skills</b>
administered allocated analyzed appraised audited balanced budgeted calculated computed developed forecasted managed marketed planned projected researched	acted conceptualized created designed developed directed established fashioned founded illustrated instituted integrated introduced invented originated performed planned revitalized shaped	assessed assisted clarified coached counseled demonstrated diagnosed educated expedited facilitated familiarized guided referred rehabilitated represented

Here are the most powerful resume words you should use to stand out from the competition and increase your chances of getting hired!

## Top 100 Powerful Resume Words

- |                  |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Advanced      | 35. Generated    | 69. Revamp       |
| 2. Assigned      | 36. Guided       | 70. Reacted      |
| 3. Assessed      | 37. Granted      | 71. Retained     |
| 4. Absorbed      | 38. Helped       | 72. Recovered    |
| 5. Accelerated   | 39. Hosted       | 73. Reinstated   |
| 6. Attained      | 40. Implemented  | 74. Rejected     |
| 7. Attracted     | 41. Investigated | 75. Sustained    |
| 8. Announced     | 42. Increased    | 76. Skilled      |
| 9. Appraised     | 43. Initiated    | 77. Saved        |
| 10. Budgeted     | 44. Influenced   | 78. Scheduled    |
| 11. Bolstered    | 45. Integrated   | 79. Supported    |
| 12. Balanced     | 46. Innovated    | 80. Secured      |
| 13. Boosted      | 47. Instituted   | 81. Simplified   |
| 14. Bargained    | 48. Justified    | 82. Screened     |
| 15. Benefited    | 49. Listed       | 83. Segmented    |
| 16. Beneficial   | 50. Logged       | 84. Streamlined  |
| 17. Comply       | 51. Maintained   | 85. Strengthened |
| 18. Critiqued    | 52. Mentored     | 86. Triumphed    |
| 19. Closed       | 53. Measured     | 87. Troubleshoot |
| 20. Collaborated | 54. Multiplied   | 88. Taught       |
| 21. Designed     | 55. Negotiated   | 89. Tutored      |
| 22. Delegated    | 56. Observed     | 90. Translated   |
| 23. Demonstrated | 57. Operated     | 91. Trained      |
| 24. Developed    | 58. Obtained     | 92. Uncovered    |
| 25. Detected     | 59. Promoted     | 93. United       |
| 26. Efficient    | 60. Presented    | 94. Unified      |
| 27. Enhanced     | 61. Programmed   | 95. Updated      |
| 28. Excelled     | 62. Provided     | 96. Upgraded     |
| 29. Exceeded     | 63. Projected    | 97. Validated    |
| 30. Enriched     | 64. Qualified    | 98. Viewed       |
| 31. Fulfilled    | 65. Quantified   | 99. Worldwide    |
| 32. Financed     | 66. Quoted       | 100. Witnessed   |
| 33. Forecasted   | 67. Recommended  |                  |
| 34. Formulated   | 68. Refine       |                  |

## Hard Skills vs Soft Skills

All job seekers have to possess both soft and hard skills, but the exact combination you'll need depends on the job and company. Remember, recruiters and hiring managers aren't looking for someone who can complete tasks *or* someone they can see working with and spending a lot of time alongside: They're looking for both.

Here are a few examples of hard skills employers might be looking for depending on what position they're looking to fill:

- Calendaring
- Customer Relationship Management Software (such as Salesforce)
- Data Analysis
- Data Visualization
- Editing and Proofreading
- Expense Reporting
- Forklift Driving
- Google Analytics
- POS Systems
- Profit Forecasting
- Programming Languages (like HTML, JavaScript, C++, or Python)
- QuickBooks
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Scheduling

Here are a few examples of soft skills employers might be looking for:

- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Curiosity
- Emotional Intelligence and Empathy
- Leadership
- Management
- Organization
- Perceptiveness
- Perseverance
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Confidence
- Time Management
- Work Ethic

Regina Borsellino, [TheMuse.com](http://TheMuse.com)

## Career Related Websites

**WorkItDaily.com** – Career and job search blogs & videos. Information on a variety of topics including job search strategies, networking, resumes, interviewing.

**CaCareerZone.org** – Career assessments, career exploration, resume building and more.

**Youtern.com** (the Savvy Intern) – Blogs geared for young professionals, as well as the universal population: finding an internship, networking, interviewing, job search strategies, career advice.

**Gladeo.org** – Explore careers by personality, industry or “spotlights” – stories of those working in a particular job.

**Salary.com** – Salaries for occupations by geographic area. Job search advice, career exploration, and more.

**Careeronestop.org** – Information on America’s Job Centers, salary & benefits, career exploration, apprenticeship programs, Job Corps, etc.

**Themuse.com** – Career advice and guidance, tips on finding your passion, jobs at inspiring companies.

**Jobmonkey.com** – “The coolest jobs on earth”. Unique, seasonal, unusual, green, high-paying, entry level jobs. Jobs abroad, on cruise ships, working with animals or at beach resorts. Informative career blogs.

**YouTube.com** – Professor Austin – videos on resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn and many other career related topics.

**LinkedIn.com** – Andrew Seaman, author of **Get Hired**, a newsletter focusing on helping you land your next job.

**Careersherpa.net** – Job search tools, templates, great newsletter, assessments, career advice.