

# Resources for Crafting Professional Documents

## I. COVER LETTERS

### A. Cover Letter for Teaching in Higher Education (with Teaching Philosophy Included)

#### **Suggested Format for the Academic Letter of Application, Teaching Focused**

##### **Overarching Advice**

*Respond to what the job ad asks for.* While you should create a letter of application as a template, adjust that letter to what is specified in each job ad. For example, if the ad asks for substantive teaching experience in multicultural studies, find a way to mention that in the letter. In all likelihood, the best paragraph to create this response to the particular job ad is paragraph 2.

##### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Create your own letterhead—make sure design is understated. Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1” margins. Your letter should be between one and two pages, single spaced.

##### **Paragraph 1**

Begin by stating the position you are applying for and where you located the job advertisement (“I write to apply for the X position at X, as advertised in X”). Briefly indicate your experience and area of specialization, being sure to connect to the details of the actual advertisement.

##### **Paragraph 2**

Describe your teaching experience, beginning with experience that is most relevant to the advertised position. Then move on to include any other teaching, professional, or administrative experience. Make your experience understandable to those outside Marshall (e.g., “I taught English 101, the University’s introductory composition course”). Mention any pedagogic innovations you’ve implemented (digital composition, for example, or innovative approaches to content).

##### **Paragraph 3**

Write a condensed version of your teaching philosophy in this paragraph. Give an overview of your perspective on teaching and learning while making sure to keep the paragraph from taking on too much length/breadth.

##### **Paragraph 4**

Discuss your research and any publications or works in progress. If you completed (or are working toward) a thesis/portfolio, include specific information about the project—title, subject, and progress to date and expected date of completion. Describe the general argument of the project in 3-4 sentences and convey how it connects to other

developments in your area of specialization. Also mention any papers you have presented at conferences, or any that have been accepted for presentation within the upcoming year.

### **Paragraph 5**

Provide specific contact information. Give home or work address, email address, home and/or cell phone numbers.

## **B. Cover Letter for Other Professional Jobs**

### **Suggested Format for the Professional Cover Letter**

#### **Overarching Advice**

*Respond to what the job ad asks for.* While you should create a cover letter as a template, adjust that letter to what is specified in each job ad. For example, if the ad asks for a specific degree, make sure you mention that you've earned that particular degree. In all likelihood, the best paragraph to create this response to the particular job ad is paragraph 2.

#### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Create your own letterhead—make sure design is understated. Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1" margins. Your letter should be around one page, single spaced.

#### **Paragraph 1**

Begin by stating the position you are applying for and where you located the job advertisement ("I write to apply for the X position at X, as advertised in X). Briefly indicate your key qualifications and their relevance to the details of the actual advertisement.

#### **Paragraph 2**

Describe your experience, beginning with experience that is most relevant to the advertised position and moving out to include any other professional experience. Make direct connections between your experience and the job ad whenever and wherever possible. Mention any specific accomplishments you've had on the job.

#### **Paragraph 3**

Discuss your education. Mention specific courses you have taken or projects you have completed that help to qualify you for the position. Again, make direct connections between your educational accomplishments and the job ad whenever and wherever possible.

#### **Paragraph 4**

Provide specific information about how you can be reached. Give home address, email address, home and/or cell phone numbers.

## C. Submission Cover Letter

### **Cover Letters for Submissions (scholarly, creative, or otherwise)**

Journals will often list what items are essential for you to include, and, in those cases, you should always follow submission guidelines. That is, however, not always certain! Listed below are the essentials for submission cover letters, as well as some pieces of advice to keep in mind. Also below are lists of things that you should NEVER do when constructing a letter. A template follows as well.

### **The Cover Letter Essentials, Which all Depend on Known Information**

- Editor's name
- Name of journal
- Title of manuscript
- Article type (research, case study, etc).
- Submission date
- Author contact information (best professional email address for reaching you)
- Brief author bio/credentials
- Statement clarifying that this work has not been published elsewhere
- Information about whether the piece is being submitted simultaneously (for creative writers only)

### **Suggestions Include**

- Listing similar works you have had published, if any
- Mentioning prior work with your editor (if you have worked with them before)

### **Never**

- Overuse jargon
- Over-embellish your significance or the significance of your piece—i.e. “first ever,” “game-changing,” etc.
- Name-drop or mention endorsements you have received
- Go over one page/write a novel
- Use humor

### **Template for Cover Letter**

- This should all be in a clean, readable font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman), black, size 12 font unless otherwise stated

[Your street address]

[City, state, zip]

[e-mail]

[preferred phone number]

[date]

[editor you are contacting]  
[editor's position or department]  
[name of journal or organization]  
[street address]  
[city, state, zip]

Dear/To: Here can be placed Ms. Mr. or Mrs., but use only if that information is known. Otherwise, it is recommended to use "Editor-in-chief" or "overseeing editor" or whatever their position is.

Paragraph one: Here tell the "journal name" that you are submitting your article, "Title," for consideration. The other 1 to 2 sentences should briefly indicate the article/submission type and submission date.

Paragraph two: This paragraph should give your contact information as well as a brief author bio and credentials. You may list up to five previous publications, selecting your best to include in the list.

Paragraph three: Include a statement that this work has not been published elsewhere and was written by you, the author(s). If this is a creative writing submission, you should also indicate whether it is a simultaneous submission.

Sincerely,  
[Your name, signature]  
[Your name, typed]

## II. CV/RÉSUMÉ

### A. CV for Teaching in Higher Education

#### **Suggested Format for the Curriculum Vitae**

##### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1" margins, and single spaced. Optimally, keep your CV to three pages, ones that are formatted to maintain careful organization and use of white space (avoid clutter on the page). However, if all your information seems relevant to your presentation as a professional, and you require more than three pages, you should take the space you feel you need. Include the below listed items at the top of the CV. Use the same font and margins as in your letter of application. Do not use letterhead.

[Name]  
[Address (Mailing: you may choose to list both home and institutional addresses)]  
[Email Address]  
[Website Address (optional)]  
[Telephone Numbers]

**Education**

List according to most recent degree--e.g., MA first

Marshall University, MA in English, expected May 2019  
Example College, BA in History, June 2014

**MA Thesis/Portfolio (if applicable)**

Include the title, in quotation marks. You may choose to include a brief two-sentence description of the project's focus/argument.

**Honors, Awards, Fellowships**

List according to most recent awards. Include prestigious undergraduate awards

Graduate Student of the Year, Marshall University	2018-2019
Phi Beta Kappa, Example College	2014

**Research and/or Creative Publications**

List here, in chronological order—most recent first—any academic or creative publications. Follow by any forthcoming publications. Examples:

“Autobiographical Subjects in Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.” Publication X. (Spring 2013): 55-67.

“Writing and the Digital Divide.” Forthcoming in *The New Pedagogy*, Fall 2019.

**Essays Under Consideration**

If you have work in circulation, list titles under this separate sub-heading. The sub-heading should be under the larger heading of Research and Publication. If possible, indicate where the pieces are being read.

**Conferences**

List here, in chronological order—most recent first—any papers delivered at professional conferences. If you have also chaired or organized panels at conferences, you may want to create a separate sub-heading, “Conference Participation,” for those activities.

**Service and Professional Experience**

List any offices you have held in professional or academic organizations (for example, a graduate student organization at Marshall or in Marshall’s English Department). Work as a graduate student representative for committees, or participation in readings groups, would fall into this category as well. Editorial positions at journals, including college literary journals, may also be listed here.

**Teaching Experience**

List institutions where you have taught—the most recent experiences first—and specify dates.

Marshall University, Instructor	2018-2019
Marshall University, Teaching Assistant	2017-2018

### **Courses Taught**

You can either make this a sub-heading of teaching experience or make it a separate category.

ENG 101, Beginning Composition	2016-2018
ENG 200, Texting the World	2018

### **Administrative Experience**

List here (chronologically, with most recent experience first) any administrative experience that may be relevant to qualifications listed in the job ad. Work in any administrative function in the English Department can be relevant, as could be any assistance in organizing graduate panels, Works-in-Progress presentations, or creative readings.

### **Other Work Experience**

Include here in chronological order (again, most recent first) any non-academic or other work experience you have had. Make sure there are no significant chronological gaps after your undergraduate education in the entire CV. Paid administrative work for a business would go in this category, rather than under administrative experience above.

### **Coursework (optional)**

If you pursued the examination track at MU, you may list here the field or topics offered on your examinations. Do this only if you think this information would be useful. Also list any graduate courses you want to highlight for potential employers—for example, that you've taken a great many multicultural courses or a lot of courses useful for teaching digital writing. Note: Be careful with this section—include the information *if it seems relevant*, but remember your goal is to present yourself as a professional, not a student.

### **Foreign Languages**

List your languages in this section, as well as your expertise in the languages. Put any computer languages in this section.

French (read, write)  
HTML and CSS (intermediate)

### **References**

Names and academic addresses with academic phone numbers and email addresses for your referees. You should select at least three, but ideally no more

than five, unless some unusual circumstance warrants it. You may want to include a separate sub-heading for “Teaching References.”

## B. Résumé for Secondary Teaching or Other Public Sector Jobs

### **Suggested Format for the Résumé**

#### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1” margins, and single spaced. Optimally, keep your résumé to one attractively organized page—omitting weak information, if necessary, to achieve this. Do not use letterhead. Include the following at *the top of the résumé* using the same font and margins as in your cover letter:

[Name]

[Address (Mailing: you may choose to list both home and institutional addresses)]

[Email Address]

[Website Address (optional)]

[Telephone Numbers]

#### **Education**

List according to most recent degree

Marshall University, MA in English, expected May 2019

Ballyhoo College, BA in History, June 2014

#### **Honors, Awards, Fellowships**

List according to most recent awards. Include prestigious undergraduate awards

Graduate Student of the Year, Marshall University 2018-2019

Phi Beta Kappa, Ballyhoo College 2014

#### **Professional Experience**

List any professional positions you have held in reverse chronological order. Include details about your responsibilities and accomplishments in each position. Be specific.

#### **Skills**

List any skills you have, including computer technology skills, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, etc.

#### **Other Categories as Needed**

Résumés are flexible documents. You can add more categories to suit your own history and, most importantly, the job ad.

#### **References**

References are not typically listed on the résumé itself. Instead, simply indicate that references are available upon request and create a separate page of references with phone numbers and email addresses for your referees. You should select at least three, but probably no more than five, unless some unusual circumstance warrants it.

### III. PERSONAL STATEMENT/TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

#### A. Personal Statement

**Personal statements**, also called statements of intent, are required for all higher education applications, and are considered one of the most important parts of the application. Below are some tips on what to include and what to stay away from mentioning.

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, statements of intent are formatted like brief essays. Many applications will state the word count for the statements.

#### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1” margins. Do not use letterhead.

#### **Do**

- Be honest and confident
- Develop a thesis about yourself and carry it throughout your essay
- Supplement your thesis with two to four points (whatever can be written about comfortably within the given word count)
- Make your first paragraph the most interesting of the statement
- Perfect your spelling and grammar

#### **Do NOT**

- Summarize your whole life
- Overwrite a minor point about yourself
- Use gimmicks
- Use cliché phrases like “I’ve always wanted to be…” or “It is my dream to be…”
- Use vague words such as “beautiful,” “meaningful,” “challenging,” or “rewarding”
- Emphasize your negatives
- Be long-winded
- Get overly personal
- Write what you think the committee wants to hear

#### **Things to Ask/Do Once You’ve Written the Statement**

- Ask yourself if you’ve been honest.
- Think of an important instructor during your undergraduate career. If they were reading your statement, what would they say? What would impress them the most?
- What makes you unique as an applicant? Did you mention that?
- Did you mention your professional goals?

- What attracts you to the position/school/career path you chose? Why here? Why now?
- Ask a professor or colleague to read over your statement.
- Revise, revise, revise!

## B. Teaching Philosophy

A Teaching Philosophy is a narrative about your perspective on teaching and learning. When writing a Teaching Philosophy, consider the following questions/sections (developed from [https://research.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2012/07/Gilmore\\_TeachingPhilosophy1.pdf](https://research.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2012/07/Gilmore_TeachingPhilosophy1.pdf)):

### **On Formatting, Design, and Length**

Use standard font such as Times New Roman, Georgia, or Garamond, in 11 or 12 point size, with 1" margins. Do not use letterhead.

### **Value of Teaching**

- Why are you a teacher? What do you bring to your teaching that makes you unique?
- Why teach your discipline, the kinds of classes you teach?

### **Student-Centered Goals**

- What knowledge or skills do you seek to foster in your students? Are your goals ...
  - Content/knowledge-oriented?
  - Process/skill-oriented?
  - Affectively/interpersonally-oriented?
  - Life-long/career-oriented?

### **Instructional Methods**

- What teaching strategies or pedagogical tools do you use to achieve your goals?
- What types of learning experiences do you create for your students?
- Why do you teach in the ways you do? Explain how these specific teaching techniques help students gain specific types of knowledge or skill.

### **Learning Environment**

- What are your expectations for teacher-student/student-student interaction and relationships?
- What actions do you take to create this relationship?
- How do you achieve inclusiveness and diversity in your classroom?

### **Assessment**

- How do you determine if students are meeting your goals?
- What types of assessments do you use (e.g. tests, papers, etc.) and why?
- How do you enable students to demonstrate their knowledge in diverse ways?
- How do you use assessment to improve your teaching?

### **Professional Development**

- What role does teaching play in your personal growth and development?
- Where does teaching fit in the picture of your career and life-long goals?
- How do you want to grow as a teacher?