Applying for Postdoc Jobs

Letters

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A short bit about the COVER letter

- Make it *short*! Not more than a page, if that.

- Be sure it reflects “you.”

- For “special” jobs, you may need a special letter:
  - If you particularly want to work with someone on the faculty, this is where to mention that person.
  - This is the place that you can indicate why you have a particular fit to an institution or a department or a type of job.

- Like all letters or statements, have someone else read!

  **NO spelling or grammar errors!!**
So..., you want a letter of recommendation?

In general:

- Carefully pick your writers.
- Choose someone who knows you or your work (if possible).
- For a teaching letter this may include someone who has:
  - visited your class
  - coordinated a course that you have taught
  - talked with you about teaching/learning
- If none of the above currently apply, make an opportunity (ahead of time, if possible) to cultivate this kind of relationship with a faculty member.
Once you have a person in mind:

- Ask *early* in the letter-writing “season” *(i.e., give notice!)* In particular, be sure to request your teaching letter at least one month in advance of your first deadline. The sooner, the better. (Otherwise, expect the letter to be late.)

- Provide information to the letter-writer, including:
  - courses taught
  - evaluations—including student comments
    (If paper, please sort/summarize. If digital, please name files usefully!)
  - any additional teaching-related activities you have participated in

- Help the letter writer “personalize” the letter to address your skills/interests.

- Let the writer know the type(s) of jobs you are interested in applying for and deadlines for those jobs.
*Examples of “Teaching-related” activities:*

- helping with “Math Circle”, or giving “Math Club” talk(s)
- seminars/workshops on teaching
- summer activities (Math camps, mentoring HS students, UG research,...)
- coaching for national/international exams
- working with a faculty member on an upper-level course
- developing materials, web-sites, special modules for a course
- volunteer tutoring
- special CRLT workshops/classes
- math “outreach”—Wolverine Express, Future University, etc...
In Summary...

- Ask early.

- Organize your materials.

- Inform your writer—and keep the writer informed.

- Reminders are OK (and are sometimes quite useful) – but “be gentle.”

- A summary of much of this talk can be found on the Instructors site: http://www.math.lsa.umich.edu/courses/Instructors/recguide.html
The atmosphere *changes*. . . !

Whether you are grabbed up immediately or waiting, this can be a tense time.

Take advantage of “safe” people to talk to.

Know that there are people in the department that care and will listen/help/make suggestions/let you “vent.”

Keep your letter writers informed—we can be happy with you, empathize, sympathize (maybe even help!)

Don’t believe everything you hear—and if you don’t hear it, don’t imagine the worst!

*Finally, know that in the end, things DO work out—most often for the best...!!! GOOD LUCK!!*