

**How to Apply for an Academic Job**  
**SESE Postdoctoral Development Program**  
**November 25, 2014**

1. Produce your most important work, different from that of your PhD advisor
2. Get your next job
3. Collaborate with enough people that you can get strong recommendation letters

Start early, apply for everything you might want – avoid only jobs you are sure you don't want. Don't turn down any jobs you haven't yet been offered!

**Cover letter**

One page only. State up front what you want to do in the next five years. Sound excited, make it clear why your research *answers important questions, why you belong in their department*. Try not to repeat what's in your statements to follow.

Start with a clear sentence so no one is confused – something like: I would like to be considered for your positions of [copied verbatim from ad] in [department from ad]. I am a [your current position] at [your institution]. Attached please find the requested [whatever they requested].

*Departments want to hire people who will become stars and raise the level of the whole department. This often means research dollars and visibility as well as big science questions. They don't want to feel like they are getting a prima donna who will threaten any individuals already there, but a person with a teamworked future.*

**CV**

Make it very clean and easy to read. Want your contact information up front, education, clear employment record, publications, awards, talks, teaching experience, grants, if you have them. If you were invited to give a talk, mark it so.

Do not include personal information (relationship, children...).

Look around on the web for the cleanest and most professional designs, and emulate them.

### **Research statement**

Less is more; explain what the big questions you are answering, and show in clear steps where you want to be in five years.

Bullet points, no huge paragraphs

No more than 3 pages long

Avoid jargon – make it easy and compelling to read

### **Teaching statement**

Be careful, when offering lists of what you'd be readily prepared to teach, and what you might like to reach for in future, that you don't step on the toes of professors who have been teaching those classes in those departments forever. Offer to help, to team-teach.

Speak about any teaching you have done. Sometimes this is hard to put together, if you haven't taught much, but that's expected so just do your best.

### **Letters of reference**

Ask before you offer a name as your reference. Ask the person if they can write you a strong letter!

Don't get letters from people who are "famous" just for that reason. The letter has to have specifics of what it's like to work with you and about your potential as a scientist and a teacher. If the person doesn't really know you, the letter is useless and in fact a red flag.

Writing letters is time-consuming. Give the letter-writer at least three weeks' notice, and send them a polite reminder three days out. The best letters are customized each time by a writer who still thinks well of you!

### **WEB SITES. RIGHT NOW.**

**Publish.** Many search committees look at years since PhD vs publications.

**PRACTICE. YOUR. TALKS. IN. PUBLIC!** And help each other out by listening and critiquing. This may be the most helpful thing you can do for all of your science and career.