START EARLY & PLAN

• Putting together job applications takes more time than you might think. It helps (you and your referees) to get as much as possible done now, before the real crunch time begins. Formatting your CV is a great thing to fill in the “down time” when you’re too tired to work more on your diss. but not yet ready for bed.

Now (ongoing):

• Collect job announcements (Linguist List, elsewhere: MLA)
• Network when possible.
  o [especially important outside US, and for short-term jobs]
• Keep an open mind — consider applying to anything you’re eligible for.
  o Note: Canadian jobs are not restricted to Canadians only, the legal wording is sometimes off-putting, but do not let this dissuade you from applying.
• Talk to your major and associate advisor(s) about what jobs you should apply for.

Soon (ongoing):

• Early on, you should contact everyone who you would like to write letters of recommendation for you. You should show them your draft CV, your draft cover letter, and discuss with them your choices of writing samples. Deadlines have a habit on sneaking up on even the most organized faculty and so getting them on board and alerted early on is important.
• Establish with your referees what they want from you, especially in terms of lead time. This is especially important for December, January deadlines, where referees may be travelling and not have ready access to their files, notes, letterhead…
• It is often considered good practice to supply referees with a pre-addressed envelope for each letter they are asked to send out for you (or a set of pre-printed mailing labels)

Assembling applications:

• Use a calendar / agenda to keep track of deadlines
• MEET THE DEADLINES
  o Allow time for mail / courier
  o Mail is slow over holidays (especially within university)
  o Deadlines typically for receipt, not postmark
    o Will you have a dissertation chapter ready to enclose?
• Checklists help.
Arranging for references:

Choose people who you think will write strong letter for you.

Ask them well in advance. Letters written under time pressure may not be quite as good as they could have been.

Provide your referees with a list of jobs you are applying for, clearly indicated deadlines, copy of the job posting, your CV, and any non-standard information you think is pertinent (about the job or yourself).

Sample referee package:

25 Sept

Here’s a list of jobs I am applying for with deadlines coming up in November:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job type;</th>
<th>where</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntax (tenure track)</td>
<td>Univ. of North Somwhere</td>
<td>November 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax (one-year)</td>
<td>Univ. of South Somwhere</td>
<td>November 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen’l Ling (one-year)</td>
<td>Univ. of Elsewhere</td>
<td>November 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax (post-doc)</td>
<td>State University</td>
<td>November 20th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have attached my current CV and the job descriptions for these from Linguist, and I have left a set of address labels in your mailbox.

Special notes:

The State U. post-doc has an all-electronic web application, including letters of reference. Here’s the web-site: http://www.su.edu/syntax_postdoc.html

The Univ. of South Somewhere has a big Siberian languages program, I’d really like to stress that aspect of my research. Can we meet to discuss my cover letter for that job? or: I’m attaching a draft of my cover letter for that job.

etc.

The application:

- Cover letter
- CV
- Writing Samples
- Teaching evaluations
- --Sample Syllabus (sometimes)
- --Research Prospectus (sometimes, e.g., Europe)
  - What does the announcement ask for?
  - What does the announcement specifically exclude?
  - Any special requirements (transcripts [p-doc], immigration status)?
The cover letter.

The cover letter states officially that you are applying for some job.

It is also the appropriate place to add any additional information and/or explanations that don’t fit elsewhere in the application.

In the US in particular, it is common to use the cover letter to introduce yourself. Many people see the cover letter as the most important part of an application package, since it’s where the committee gets the most “sense of the candidate”.

From the Semantics JobWiki:

There are three schools of thought about the cover letter:

- The "just the facts, ma'am" school, which makes for very short cover letters ("I wish to apply for your job. Enclosed are the following materials. I will be at the LSA if you would like to interview me.")

- The "short profile" school, where you use the cover letter to give a one-page summary of your profile, who you are, what you work on, what your plans are, how you might fit into the department you're applying for, etc. I personally tend to lean toward this kind of cover letter, since it gives you a chance to portrait a coherent picture of what you would bring to your new colleagues. And, it doesn't hurt at all to work on developing a coherent vision of yourself in your chosen field.
  - --I agree that the "short profile" letter is better. It can't possible hurt, if you write the letter so that the "just the facts" content is easy to spot. Since there will probably be members of the search committee and department who don't understand much of what they find in your writing, this is your opportunity to communicate something (brief) to them about why your work is important. (Paul Portner)

- There is also the school of thought that has, in addition to the cover letter, a research statement and a teaching philosophy statement. Personally, I don't like this approach; it takes up too much time to read through everything. If a candidate's basic profile is good enough, there will be plenty of time to get a research statement and teaching philosophy at the LSA or campus visit. (Paul Portner)
Basic cover letter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>Content / sample text</th>
<th>Purpose / checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 1</td>
<td><em>I am writing to apply for the one-year position in Syntax that you have advertised. Enclosed, please find my current CV, my most recent teaching evaluations and the following writing samples: XX, XX, XX. I have arranged for letters of recommendation from XX, YY and ZZ to follow under separate cover.</em></td>
<td>Apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contents of package: Do they meet the posted requirements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What will arrive separately?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2</td>
<td><strong>Dissertation and research blurb.</strong></td>
<td>Shows your suitability for the job and department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe your dissertation and (especially for tenure-track jobs) how this fits into a broader research program. “Where do you see your research taking you for the next 5-7 years?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3</td>
<td><strong>Teaching blurb.</strong></td>
<td>Shows your suitability for the teaching portions of the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you are not including teaching evaluations, why not (no formal procedure, sections too small) – is there something you can offer instead “since courses are not formally evaluated here, I have arranged for an additional letter from Prof. X. evaluating my teaching abilities.”</td>
<td>Experience, abilities, interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there are aspects of your background that you’d like to stress for a particular job that don’t leap out of the CV, you can mention them here. “How do you see yourself fitting in to the teaching program at our department?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4</td>
<td><strong>Service blurb.</strong></td>
<td>Optional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to department and field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5</td>
<td><strong>Special considerations</strong></td>
<td>Don’t overuse this – give explanations where appropriate, but no excuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternity leave, extended illness, any other reasons for ‘gaps’ in your CV.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 6</td>
<td><strong>Closing:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special contact information. Attending LSA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General points:

- Honesty.

- Use the letter (sparingly) to draw attention to points embedded in the CV, especially those that might not otherwise stand out, but which are particularly pertinent to the job.

- Tailor your letter to the job and department you are applying to.
  - Check out the website of the department you’re applying to, and read the job description carefully.
  - Draw connections in the letter to where you might ‘fit’ in the department.

Order: Blocks 2-3 can be interchanged, depending on job.

- For tenure-track, you want to aim to complement the department’s current program: aim to present yourself as compatible enough with the department to be of interest to the people there, but distinct enough that you will fill in gaps, present something new (why would they hire a clone of someone they already have?).

- For a one-year teaching position, research interests aren’t so important (though you could still be asked to give a seminar); for a three-year post-doc with no teaching, teaching evaluations and “courses you’d like to teach” are not particularly informative.

Controversial: Self-evaluation

The best letters convey this information indirectly, without direct statements like the following:

- “I think I would make a good colleague in your department, because…”
- teaching “philosophy” (I consider myself an effective teacher because…”)