

General tips for writing a teaching statement

- Be brief
- Use specific examples
- Be discipline-specific
- Be yourself
- Connect with your readers
- Think of readers as future colleagues

DO	DON'T
Be positive	Recall negative experiences
Use specific examples, not vague generalities	Apologize for lack of teaching experience
Prioritize	Use “should”
Talk about students and content	Use a passive voice
Address teaching/research interface	Over-generalize
Limit to two pages max	Ignore future growth as a teacher
Revise, get feedback	Have any mistakes whatsoever

Good questions to ask about teaching at an interview

- What is the teaching load?
- How is teaching factored into tenure/promotion process?
- Perspective on scholarship of teaching and learning?
- Access to and support for instructional technology (using ppt in the classroom, clickers, wireless)
- Tactic: bring up current teaching issue and ask how it is addressed by that department

Preparing to teach an interview class – questions to ask

- What should you teach?
- Setting: actual class, mock class, other?
- Who will be in the class?
- Related to likely teaching responsibilities?
- Student demographic?
- Media/presentation support?

Practice (out loud, write it down)
Practice for others – in and out of discipline
If technology is involved, have a backup
Handouts or activities – provide materials
Teaching center consultation, if available

Common misconception about teaching statements: it is not a philosophy (theoretical, didactic), but a statement to inform the reader about your teaching – what you value and practice, and how you do it.

Teaching and related experience

The prompts below will help you reflect on teaching situations that you have experienced. These may include courses that you have taught or taken, mentoring assignments in a research lab, and possibly other situations where teaching happens. Reflecting on these experiences is a good starting point for developing your own teaching philosophy as you begin to articulate it in a teaching statement and during a job interview.

1. Identify teaching and/or teaching-related experiences you have had. You may also include experiences that you had as a student that also shaped your perspectives on teaching and learning.

2. What are your strengths as a teacher? In which of the experiences listed in #1 did you develop or apply this strength? Concrete, discipline-based examples are especially well regarded by search committees.

3. Recall a few of your absolute best and worst experiences as a teacher (or student). What did you learn from these episodes and how has this contributed to your philosophy of teaching?

Writing a statement of teaching philosophy

The following questions are intended to prompt reflection on teaching and learning. Consider the questions below you find to be most important, and jot down thoughts. Your responses can help you begin to construct your own teaching statement.

1. What are your goals as a teacher?
2. What is your personal best in teaching?
3. What do you learn when you teach?
4. What are the qualities of a good teacher?
5. Who are your role models in teaching?
6. What are some pedagogical methods you employ? Examples of effective approaches?
7. How do you interact with students?
8. How do you deal with problems? Think in terms of concrete examples.
9. What classroom environment do you aim to create?
10. How do you motivate students?
11. How do you approach teaching the discipline to majors? To non-majors?
12. What aspects of teaching challenge you the most?
13. Why do you want to teach?
14. In your ideal career, what is the balance between teaching and research?
15. What connections do you see between your research and teaching activities?
16. What makes a course successful?
17. Over time, how have you developed as a teacher?
18. What are your goals as a teacher, and how do you plan to achieve them?
19. What is an important issue facing teachers in your discipline today?

Talking about teaching during an academic interview

The following questions have all been asked during academic interviews. Practice, practice, practice.

1. What was your best teaching experience?
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
3. How would you teach a basic survey course in [your discipline]? Discuss themes, books, assignments, strategies.
4. Describe a new course you would develop for (majors, non-majors, cross-listed/interdisciplinary program, graduate students). Talk about course objectives, texts and tools, assignments, assessment, resources.
5. How do you teach to diverse groups of students (minorities, adult learners, under-prepared vs. overachievers, high vs. low aptitude for the subject, etc.)?
6. A brilliant student asks an insightful question, but a few of your students are struggling with basic concepts. How would you handle this?
7. One of your students is clearly struggling and keeps raising questions about foundational material, while you sense the rest of the class is getting bored and eager to move on. How would you handle this?
8. Describe a problem situation and how you handled it.
9. You have never taught a lecture course before, but this position requires doing so. How would you go about it?
10. When did you fail as a teacher, and what did you learn from that?
11. In your ideal job, what is the balance between teaching and research?
12. Would you be satisfied at a school where teaching is prioritized over research?
13. How would you teach undergraduates in your research laboratory?
14. What do you want students to get out of your class?
15. Our Dean is encouraging more technology in the classroom. How would you use it in your courses here?
16. During our winter intersession, faculty members have opportunities to teach experimental courses to small groups of students. What would you like to teach in this context?
17. What three words best describe you as a teacher?
18. How would your students describe you as a teacher?
19. How would your students describe your grading (tough but fair, easy, etc.)?
20. How do you handle disruptive behavior in the classroom?
21. How do you handle plagiarism?
22. What courses do you feel prepared to teach right now?
23. How do you get students motivated and involved in your classroom?
24. Describe an activity you (have used or would use) in the classroom. Why was it successful and how does this demonstrate your approach as a teacher?
25. How could you improve as a teacher?
26. We offer a night program for nontraditional students. Would you be willing to teach some evening lectures and labs?
27. What are your long-term goals as a teacher and how do you plan to achieve them?

Teaching statement links:

<http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/for-grad-students/teaching-statement/>

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/2003/03/2003032702c.htm>

<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/careerprep/jobsearch/application.html>

http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~teachcen/WUTC/TA/teach_phil.htm

<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/philosophy.html>

<http://sll.stanford.edu/projects/tomprof/newtomprof/postings/193.html>

<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/developphilosophy.html>

Reference: Nancy Van Note Chism. 1998. "Developing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement." Essays on Teaching Excellence. 9 (3). Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

<http://www.yale.edu/graduateschool/teaching/forms/Sample%20Teaching%20Statements%20%28ALL%29.pdf>

A few resources on preparing a teaching portfolio:

<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/portfolios/index.html>

<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/teachfolio.html>

General tips for writing a research statement

Compiled from a presentation by Tony Koleske, Yale University

Before you begin: Collect several examples of research statements from others who have been successful on the job market (no shame in mimicking style, as long as content is yours).

1. Set a deadline for completing the proposal well ahead of when it is actually due, break down into small digestible pieces and write. Best ideas come after you have written first draft.
2. Other people’s critical comments will significantly improve. Get critical feedback from experts and non-experts.

Structure of a research proposal

Usually 3+ pages (more is not necessarily better)

Past and current research (1 page)

- Describe the overall focus/theme to your research interests.
- Thematically tie together graduate and postdoc work (e.g. I am interested in the fundamental problem of how.....). This shows that you have a master plan to your science.
- Emphasize approaches you have taken
- Outline your discoveries as a student and postdoc.
- Highlight what impact your work had on your field and how you know it had impact (e.g. it was highlighted in a mini-review, Faculty of 1000 etc.)

Future Research Plans (2-3 pages)

- If you propose to work on new problem-give an overview
- Organize as you would a grant proposal
 - Divide into Aims (3 is a good number)
 - Describe amount of work that would take a 4-5 person lab 4 years to complete
- Can also include more ambitious longer-term plans, but do this under separate heading.

List of references

DO	DON'T
Include pictures/diagrams/graphics	Assume everyone is expert in your field
Keep it clear, concise, and interesting	Use acronyms and jargon without explanation
Put name on every page and number pages	Clutter the page (use at least 10-11 pt fonts and 1 margins)
Proofread and get feedback from other readers	Have any typos