

Policies and Procedures for The Denim Beret Correspondence Writing Courses

Last updated: 3/18

Welcome to *The Denim Beret*! Below is some information you will need as I begin working with your student(s) this year. Please contact me if you have any questions.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Teacher: Cheri Blomquist

Office hours: Monday-Friday; closed Saturdays, Sundays, and major holidays

Email: cblomquist@denimberet.com

Phone: (720) 999-1658 (cell)

MOUNTAIN TIME ZONE

NOTE: All stated times in my communications will be in Mountain time to prevent me from making calculation mistakes. Please know your time difference, and account for it in your calendar when we set up video chats or phone calls.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS: You will need to have a dependable computer, printer, PDF reader, webcam, and scanner to work through The Denim Beret writing courses. You will also need a Google account and Gmail address. This account and address should be ones to which your student has access but that you can also access. This is to help ensure internet safety and transparency with The Denim Beret. Students will use Google apps: Classroom (central platform for all work), Gmail (email), Drive (word processing and document exchange), and Hangout (video chat).

The link for opening a Google account and Gmail address is:

<https://accounts.google.com/signup?hl=en>

Please note: Instruction cannot begin until this account is ready and test emails have been exchanged.

TEACHER-STUDENT CONTACT POLICY: I will do my best to ensure that parents are aware of all teacher-student interaction. If a student communicates with me through his or her own email address, I will always copy the parent in my reply, unless it is very brief and minor (such as for a quick technical question). Any live communication must be conducted only in the presence of a parent or adult guardian. This does not mean the parent must be sitting next to the student throughout the call, but the parent does need to be present in a room nearby. If this is not possible at the time of the appointment, I will need to reschedule.

If you discover that I have forgotten to follow the teacher-student contact policy as outlined above, *please* call my attention to it. Safety and transparency are important components of all online instruction with minors, just as they are in physical settings. I will not overlook this safety rule purposely and need to know when it happens.

STUDENT DEADLINES: Although The Denim Beret courses are completed independently, they are not self-paced. All students are expected to meet assignment deadlines, unless other arrangements have been made with the parent. This gives them the best chance of finishing the course within a school year, and it helps prepare them for the more stringent requirements they will face in advanced courses later on.

CORE COURSE VS. SUPPLEMENT? It is important to understand that The Denim Beret writing courses are intensive, often requiring several hours per week to complete; thus, it needs to be considered an essential part of your student's language arts program. Using The Denim Beret as a supplement or enrichment course will not work well, although deadlines can be extended as needed. If a parent is seeking a supplement, I suggest purchasing a few lessons *a la carte* to address specific needs.

LATE WORK POLICY: I will send a reminder email to the student a day or two after a missed deadline. If the student does not respond in a timely manner, I will contact the student again before contacting the parent directly. If I do not receive a timely response from the parent, I will begin following my "Non-correspondence Policy" as detailed below.

DEADLINE EXTENSIONS: Sometimes students need an extension due to illness, vacation, and other conflicts. In such cases, students should let me know how much of an extension they need. I will then set a new due date for that assignment. Extensions are an option always open to families; however, keep in mind that every extension will delay the conclusion of the course.

RESPONSE TIME: Please allow two full business days for the return of evaluated assignments. If I don't respond within the expected time frame, please send me an email reminder, in case your assignment was accidentally overlooked or deleted.

WHAT TO DO IF I DON'T RESPOND TO YOUR EMAILS: When you enroll in *The Denim Beret*, you are supporting a home microbusiness with all the limitations that may entail. It is important, therefore, that you understand that I will never ignore your emails or phone calls. If I don't respond to you in a timely manner, please assume that something went wrong in cyberspace (or my memory!) and try again.

Because I do not employ a staff and realize that something may suddenly happen to me or my technical capabilities, I am providing you with a secondary email address: etblomquist@gmail.com. This address should be used only if I do not respond to you after you have tried to email and call me several times.

THE PARENT'S ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS: Although I may be your student's writing instructor, your support is important. As your student works with me, one of the best ways you can assist is to look over completed assignments to make sure your student has followed all instructions. Incomplete assignments or assignments that do not follow instructions will be sent back for corrections, which will delay the conclusion of the course.

In fact, the most common reasons that students don't finish their course on time are missed deadlines and carelessness with instructions.

Another important way you can help is to drop me notes on occasion to let me know how your student is doing. I have learned that many students will not ask for help or express feelings of stress or confusion, even if I ask them pointed questions. With that in mind, although I do my best with students, I trust parents to alert me if anything is wrong.

HOW MUCH TO HELP: Most parents understandably want their students to turn in nothing less than excellent work. However, it is important that you refrain from helping your student so much on an assignment that I cannot get a clear idea of the student's true abilities. Because you have the final say in your student's education, it is not a matter of cheating but of possible confusion on my part. If I think that your student is more advanced than he (or she) really is, I may inadvertently challenge him more than he is able to handle and may also neglect to help him when he really needs it.

COPYRIGHT NOTE: Because I am operating as a teacher, not an author, and because I use some copyrighted teacher resources, I cannot sell the course for you to self-teach. It is necessary for me to be directly involved with the completion of each lesson, and I will provide handouts and worksheets only at the appropriate time.

LITERATURE AND THE DENIM BERET: The Denim Beret is a secular course designed to serve all students. My world view, however, is conservative Catholic Christian. I also take a somewhat liberal approach to literature. This means that I draw from various types of literature for my writing models, including classic and contemporary, children's and adult, fiction and non-fiction, Judeo-Christian and non-religious. When I choose religious models, I attempt to choose texts that are not inflammatory, controversial, or evangelistic, and the excerpts are chosen with a clear purpose in mind. If at any time a reading assigned to your student is troublesome to you, please let me know. I will either provide an alternative, or I will assist you in finding your own alternative.

GRADING POLICY: I don't use traditional letter grades, unless a parent requests it. Because I prefer to keep parents in control of final grades and because I approach writing as an art, I focus on mastery and growth. My grading key (below) reflects this philosophy. Please don't try to translate this key into letter grades, because they don't necessarily compute that way. In other words, an "AM" is not just another way of saying "B." If you need a letter grade for reporting purposes, please let me know.

GM = goal mastery
AM = almost-there mastery
MM = mid-level mastery
LM = low-level mastery
NP = skill expected but not shown
N/A = not applicable

Students who receive the 'MM' grade and the grades below it will almost always be asked to revise; however, some 'AM' grades will also require revision, depending on the reasons for the grade. Sometimes students will need to revise more than once to pass a lesson. Revision is a common and necessary part of The Denim Beret approach.

PRIVACY POLICY: When I receive positive feedback, I often like to quote it on my website. I also like to use student work as models on occasion. If at some point I want to use any quotes or models from you or your student, I will ask you for permission to do this. I also do not sell or give student or parent information to third parties.

CORRESPONDENCE POLICY: The Denim Beret primarily uses email to correspond with families. Video chats are required during the course but are occasional and always scheduled ahead of time. I will place a telephone call only by prior arrangement in special circumstances. In the rare event that a family drops the course without notifying me, I will adhere to the following procedure:

- 1) I will first follow my late-work policy.
- 2) If I do not receive a response from the parent in a timely manner, I will send a second email.
- 3) If I do not receive a response to this second attempt within a week or so, I will consider this to be an unofficial withdrawal from the program. I will then place the student on "inactive" status until I hear otherwise from the parent.

PAYMENT POLICY: Tuition for each course must be paid by the due date given on the invoice, although a two-payment plan is available for those who need it. If payment isn't received by the specified date and other arrangements have not been made, the student may not continue with the lessons. All parents will receive invoices shortly following registration with their totals clearly detailed and with payment instructions provided.

REFUND POLICY: If you need to withdraw your student from *The Denim Beret* for any reason, refunds are available through the final lesson of unit 2 of each course OR within 90 days—whichever comes first. The amount of the refund will be for the unused portion of the course. No refunds will be given for any portion of subsequent units in most cases.