

# Policies and Procedures for The Denim Beret Correspondence Writing Courses (Parents)

Last updated: 10/20

Welcome to *The Denim Beret Writing Program*! 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](mailto:cblomquist@denimberet.com)

Phone: (720) 999-1658 (cell)

EASTERN TIME ZONE

NOTE: All stated times in my communications will be in Eastern 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 writing courses. You will also need an email address that you check daily and either Skype, Zoom, or Google Meet capability. 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 who use Gmail will use Google apps: Classroom (central platform for all work), Gmail (email), Drive (word processing and document exchange), Meet (video chat), and Hangout (instant messaging). For students who do not use Gmail and who do not want to set up an account, I will determine alternatives once I understand their capability.

If you choose the Google option and do not have an account, the link for opening one is: <https://accounts.google.com/signup?hl=en>

Please note: Instruction cannot begin until you have all the required technology available and test emails have been exchanged.

**TEXTBOOKS:** *The Denim Beret Writing Program* requires substantial textbook-style reading; however, each reading is included in your tuition and is sent in PDF format either through Google Classroom or as an email attachment. In level 2 students also begin to read published essays using *The Seagull Reader: Essays*, by Joseph Kelly. This book is not included in your tuition; it must be purchased separately.

**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 may be completed independently, they are not self-paced. All students are expected to meet assignment deadlines unless other arrangements have been made. 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.

**CORE COURSE VS. SUPPLEMENT?** It is important to understand that *The Denim Beret* writing courses are intensive, sometimes 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.

**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 Writing Program*, you are supporting a one-person operation with all the limitations that may entail. It is therefore important for you to know 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](mailto: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 tutor, not an author, and because I use some copyrighted teacher resources, I cannot sell the course for you to self-teach at this time. 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. I am working on a parent-led edition of the course, but I do not have a projected publication date at this time.

**LITERATURE AND THE DENIM BERET:** *The Denim Beret Writing Program* is a secular course designed to serve all students. My world view, however, is conservative, traditional, and Christian. I also take a somewhat liberal approach to literature. This means that I draw from various types of literature for my writing models, which may not be politically correct. If at any time a reading assigned to your student is troublesome to you, please let me know and we can try to find a suitable alternative together.

**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 a subjective 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, I will provide one.

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.

**LATE WORK POLICY:** I send a couple of reminders to the student when work is overdue, always copying the parent on the email. If I do not receive a timely response after several attempts, I will begin following my “Non-correspondence Policy” as detailed below.

**NON-CORRESPONDENCE POLICY:** I primarily use email to correspond with families, although I will post assignment-related messages to Classroom. 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. I never ignore emails or calls, so parents should not give up trying to reach me if they do not receive an expected response. If a family drops the course without notifying me, I will adhere to the following procedure:

- 1) I will first follow my late-work policy (above).
- 2) If I do not receive either the assignment or any correspondence about it, I will consider the student to be unofficially withdrawn from the program. I will then place the student on “inactive” status until I hear otherwise from the parent. I will not chase parents or students down with multiple letters and phone calls, and I will not refund any payment without a formal request within the parameters of my refund policy (see below).

**PAYMENT POLICY:** Tuition must be paid before instruction can begin. The invoice you receive will show the due date on it. A two-payment plan is available upon request, and instruction can begin after the first payment is made. If the second payment isn't made by the due date, however, I may need to stop working with your student. Although I will not tell your student that the reason is non-payment, it is still an awkward situation that I try to avoid.

**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 1 of each course OR within 90 days—whichever comes first. The amount of the refund will be for the unused portion of the course.