

How to Approach an Art Center

Create a cover letter in which you introduce yourself, describe the course you want to offer, and tactfully state why you are the right person to lead this class or workshop. Without going into too much detail, be sure to include information about how long a course you're proposing and who would attend it. This can be professionally assembled into a folder called a Press Pack or Press Kit. It will typically include:

cover letter	artist statement
course description	photo of yourself
short bio statement	images of your work
résumé	copies of publicity

Call each art center on your target list and ask to whom you should send your information. Get the name and the correct spelling, as well as the gender of the person if the name is ambiguous. Some centers, especially those connected with a university, may have a Course Proposal Form. Verify the address while you have them on the phone.

Assemble the Press Pack and mail it, including a stamped self-addressed letter if you want any of the elements returned. This is usual with photos and slides, but it will otherwise be assumed (and hoped) that they will keep your materials on file.

Allow about a week for the folder to arrive, then make a follow-up phone call. Avoid calling at lunch time and too close to the end of the workday. Identify yourself and ask for the person to whom you wrote the letter. When that person gets on the phone, ask if they received your folder. Some people get a lot of mail, so don't be surprised if they don't remember you right away. Remind the person nicely about who you are and what your package looked like. Restate that you want to teach a class in PMC, that you have experience as a teacher (if true) and that you can supply the specialized equipment (if true). This is your chance to sell yourself.

With any luck, you'll soon be talking about PMC, and here your enthusiasm will lead the way. Move the discussion around to this question: "Can you use a class like this right now?" If they say no, ask when they make plans for their next season. If they're not interested, find out why. It might help you on your next presentation.

If all this sounds scary, fear not. Art center directors and employees are nice people — they work in the arts, after all. They really want to offer new and exciting classes to their students, and you are coming to them with exactly that. If your first try isn't a good match, keep calling more centers until you find the sites that work.