

Top 10 Do's and Don'ts of the Academic Job Search

Do:

1. **Start a year ahead**

The academic job search is a slow process. There may be phone interviews, off-site interviews, day-long (or several days long) campus interviews, etc.

2. **Only apply if qualified**

Read the ad and make sure your skills and experience are in line with what they are looking for. While you do not always need to have 100% of the qualifications, applying for jobs where you are dramatically under qualified just wastes your time and the time of the search committee.

3. **Avoid form letters**

Search committees want to know why you want to work at their university and how your skills and experience match the specifics of the job you are applying for. Generic letters never fully address the qualifications and are most often discarded.

4. **Know the institution and department**

Find out the strengths and limitations of both the institution and department. What is the focus of the department and how does this job fit in? This will help you in writing a strong cover letter and in the interview process.

5. **Attend professional association meetings**

In addition to staying on top of current research and trends, screening interviews may be held there and you can take advantage of numerous networking opportunities.

6. **Keep records**

Know where you have applied to, their timelines, contacts, etc. This will help you stay organized and keep everything from running together.

7. **Ask your references for permission before listing them**

It is important to know if they would be able to provide a positive reference for you. Be sure to provide them with your CV.

8. **Practice interviewing**

This includes your job talk! You may find assistance from your university's career center, trusted colleagues or a mentor.

9. **Have questions to ask in the interview**

Come prepared with both general questions (e.g.: vision for department) and specific to that institution. Also, have more questions than you think you'll need. Chances are, you will be meeting with several individuals and you will not want to repeat all of your questions.

10. **Follow up with a thank you letter**

It is important to thank the search committee for their time and reinforce your interest in and qualifications for the position.

Don't:

- 1. Wait until the last minute to update your resume or compile your teaching portfolio**
The last thing you want to do is stress out over what should go in your portfolio when your dream job becomes available.
- 2. Forget to proofread your cover letter and CV before you send it**
Even the best and brightest make mistakes sometimes (and spell check does not always pick them up!)
- 3. Send unnecessary information too soon**
Only send what is asked for. If they want more, they will let you know.
- 4. Interview somewhere if you would never accept the job**
It wastes the search committee's time and can have negative impact on your career if they find out.
- 5. Dress too casually for the interview**
It is better to be overdressed than underdressed, so dress up from what you wear in the classroom.
- 6. Badmouth a previous institution**
It is a small world out there!
- 7. Go into your job/tech talk without knowing out how long it should be or knowing your audience**
Not all who attend will be from your area of expertise so keep that in mind as you prepare your talk.
- 8. Overstate your qualifications**
The truth is likely to come out eventually and misrepresenting your qualifications can ruin your career.
- 9. Be overly aggressive**
Job searching can be a stressful time, but don't call two days after the interview to find out when you can expect to hear back (you should ask their timeline during the interview).
- 10. Get discouraged if you do not get a job offer right away**
As mentioned earlier, the academic job search is a long process. You will likely interview at several institutions before landing an offer. It is all about finding the right match (for both you and them!)