

# *10 Tips for Adjunct Job Hunters*

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## **P**ut a bow on the package

When you send in your applicant package – go the extra mile. That means not only using high quality stationary, but ensuring that the packet is absolutely complete. Send a highly customized cover letter, your CV, one or two letters of recommendation, and a copy of your grad school transcripts. Leave no questions left unanswered. This may be your only chance to show why you are the best candidate and should be invited in for an interview.



## **B**reak the rules

Many institutions insist on applying only through its official online process and only for advertised jobs. Do so, but always follow-up by sending a hardcopy of your packet to HR. Why? Because the online systems are one-size-fits-all and don't give you much of a chance to stand out from the crowd. In addition, skip HR (doing so increases the chances of getting your packet looked at by the right people) by sending an additional hardcopy to the head of the department where you want to teach. They may have needs that they haven't shared with HR yet and you'll automatically be on their radar screen. If they like your credentials, they may even end up creating a job for you.



## **F**ollow-up

If you don't hear anything within a week or two, consider picking up the phone and following up with HR (or the department chair) directly. Ask if they received your packet and have given it any thought. If they say they have no openings, ask when they anticipate one. If you're told point blank that you're not qualified – ask what would have made you qualified. Think of it as not only chasing a lead, but an opportunity to see how your packet is being received by decision-makers in the field. Then continue to follow-up. Schools are famous for having “no openings” and then scrambling for Adjuncts a week before the semester starts (the absent-minded professor is alive and well in academia). Keep yourself on their radar.



## **S**tep into the Millennium

Don't forget to sell yourself as an educator for both face-to-face and online classes. Online learning is NOT the future – it is now. Often, online classes are scheduled and administered by entirely different departments. Do your homework on the institution and find out if this is the case. If it is, send the online director one of your packets.



## **D**on't just tell – offer to show

Instead of just telling the institution how great you are in your packet – offer to show them. You could do this by volunteering to give a lecture on one of your areas of expertise. Hint: if you get the opportunity to lecture – videotape it. Then you can edit and put the lecture (or just a sample) on YouTube or another service and add it to your application packet. You don't have to make it open to the public (but why not?) You could make it private and send potential employers a password needed to view. A video of you in action adds an entirely new dimension to your application packet and sets you apart. It's the next best thing to being there and shows that you know how to harness the power of technology.



## **P**repare for the interview

Beyond shining your shoes and practicing your eye contact in the mirror, do some research on your interviewer. Look for their CV and make note of things you have in common. Then you can tailor your answers toward areas you know they are interested in. Above all, come with specific examples to likely questions. An interview is not the time to be vague. Strong, real life examples based on your own experiences will grab the interviewer's attention and help to set you apart.



## **K**now your personal philosophy on teaching and learning

You completed this exercise at the beginning of Seminal II. Review it and work it into your answers. It's amazing how many candidates (and seasoned professors) can't answer the question "what is your personal philosophy on teaching and learning?" Don't be one of them (and also don't be surprised if, when it comes to pedagogy, you are talking over the interviewer's head.)



## **B**e patient

You've done everything right and the interview was a breeze – but you're still not teaching. Be patient. Schools are not like companies where, if they like you, they tell you to report to work on Monday. There are scheduling issues and sometimes major bureaucratic obstacles that must be negotiated before a new adjunct professor steps foot in the classroom. Other places operate much more quickly, but all schools are subject to semester scheduling requirements. This is another reason why it's important to get on their radar screen early and stay on it. You may not be showered with offers immediately, but the phone will certainly start ringing after you've been at it for a few months.



## **B**e collegial

Collegiality is a hot topic in academia these days. In other words, are you the type of person who people enjoy working with? Or do they dive out the windows when they see you coming down the hall? Assuming you're the former – don't keep it a secret. Be cordial and warm during all interactions, including phone conversations. If you're lucky enough to be interviewed, go out of your way to introduce yourself to other professors and support staff. It makes a huge difference, especially when the boss asks everybody what they thought of you (yes, of course they do that.) Don't you want people talking about how collegial you were?



## **K**iss a toad

Your first teaching offer may end up being for a class you don't want to teach, in a department you're not interested in, on an inconvenient day, and for slave wages. Take the job. Sometimes it's a test of how bad you want to teach. Other times it's a rite of passage that all educators in a particular institution go through (new guy gets the "lemon".) Then again, it may just be a crummy job. Take it anyway and do the most fantastic job you can. Add the teaching experience to your CV, get a solid letter of recommendation, and parlay the experience into your next (and hopefully better) job. Rinse and repeat.

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