



Teacher Portfolio & Preparation Series

DOs and DON'Ts of Job Searches

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **Start early!**
2. **Do an information search in addition to your job search to learn fuller information about the program/institution you are applying for (see Job Search section of the TiPPS website for explanation)**
3. **Always do your homework (easier now with the Internet)!**
4. **Be flexible and versatile—institutions are looking for people who meet several of their program's needs and are flexible to teach several kinds of courses. Show this flexibility in your CV and cover letter, as well as when you talk with prospective employers.**

*WHEN YOU ARE PLANNING TO MOVE TO A NEW LOCATION**

** many of these things apply (or can be adapted) to local job searches as well*

- Go to conferences, attend talks by people who are from the area you want to move to, and then ask if you can have coffee with them to pick their brains about the teaching situation where they live. (This is likely to produce more results than going to a job fair and (a) hoping to find that there is a job listed in the area, and if so, (b) hoping you'll get an interview)
- Join specialized local, regional, and national professional associations (e.g., Hawai'i Association of Language Teachers, American Association of Teachers of Korean, NAFSA-Association of International Educators, Modern Language Association)
- Join listservs or newsletter mailing lists (e.g., ESLJ-L, WPA Listserv, Linguist List)
- Do your homework (check out websites and other information that may be available about institutions in the area where you are planning to move)
- If you are visiting the area, write a formal request at least 2-3 weeks prior, to ask for an informational meeting during your visit. Consider including the following in your inquiry; be sure to follow the local protocols regarding informational meeting requests:
(a) when you'll be visiting, or that you have arrived
(b) how long you intend to stay/visit

- (c) request an appointment to learn more about the kind of teaching they do, and about other language and literature programs in the community
- (d) a brief description about the variety of teaching experiences you have

And after you get there . . .

- Find out everything you can about institutions and programs there. Check their websites, or call their offices and ask them for brochures and other literature. Read up on what the school is about, who the administrators and faculty are, what classes are offered, and what their schedule is. Knowing their schedules is especially important, to make sure you avoid showing up or calling when they're in the midst of testing, or graduation, or other unfortunate times that may end up costing you a job opportunity.
- Join the local language educators' association if you haven't already
- Visit campuses
- Drop off, mail, or email an updated CV with your new *local* address, phone number and email. **But** be sure you know appropriate cultural means for doing this. Are there protocols, or chains of command you should follow?

Then, if you get some part-time work . . .

- Send schools a brief follow-up email message or letter, telling them that you did get some part-time work and how that affects your availability (but reminding them that you still ARE available and interested in substitute- or emergency- teacher work). This also gives you credibility—it shows that you are “hireable” locally.

WHEN APPLYING FOR SPECIFIC POSITIONS

Study the job ad/description carefully

- *What are the minimum qualifications?* List them out on a piece of paper and jot down the ways you meet each one (i.e., Master's degree, particular work experiences, etc.). In order to make the first cut, you need to have all of the minimum qualifications met.
- *What are the desirable qualifications?* List them out on a piece of paper and jot down the ways you meet them (i.e., past jobs, similar work/research in courses, etc.). It may well be the case that you have very direct experience related to some of the desirable qualifications but have none for others. Are there indirect ways you might meet those other desirable qualifications? Are there jobs where you used or developed similar or related skills or expertise that could be applicable to the position?
- *What will the job duties be?* Have you done similar duties in past or current jobs, volunteer work, or other areas? Have you worked in similar situations before? How do you feel you will be able to handle the proposed duties of the job? Are there other duties

not listed that would appear to be crucial for the job? How might you be able to meet those? Jot down notes.

- If you haven't done so already, *find out more about the hiring institution and about the job*. (Employers tend to keep ads on file and pull them out when they want to use them again. This means that ads typically will cover all the bases in terms of the program's overall needs. Try to tactfully find out what the primary foci might be for hiring this time around if you can.)
- *Is there a specific person listed who is in charge of applications or the selection committee?* If not, find out whom your cover letters and applications should be addressed to. Generic greetings on a cover letter ("Dear Sir or Madam") can be a turn-off and show the potential employer that you didn't even spend the time to find out his/her name.
- *When is the deadline?* Make sure to mark the deadline on your calendar and allow sufficient time for mailing or online submission of your application materials. Also, if you will need to submit other documents (i.e., transcripts, letters of recommendation, etc.), make sure you've taken care of the requests far enough in advance to make it by the deadline. People writing you a recommendation are doing you a favor and shouldn't be made to rush around at the last minute because you were not on top of things.
- By studying the ad and finding out more about the hiring institution and position, you will get a better sense of what your prospective employer is really looking for and what the key facets of the job are.

A NOTE ABOUT HIDDEN POSITIONS

- It is possible to send out feelers for the hidden positions. At least 6 months ahead of your availability for employment, send out inquiries regarding future openings to targeted desirable employers in the area. If there is a type of position you would be interested in, for an organization whose mission is well-aligned with yours, send a tailored cover letter and CV requesting to be notified of possible future openings.

**Caution: Excellent research is required before sending out this type of inquiry. Be sure to send your tailored inquiry to a potential supervisor, and not someone who may feel threatened by the inquiry!*

Finally, remember to tailor your CV and cover letter for the job application and be prepared and flexible during your interview (see other TiPPS handouts for more information).

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