Getting a Faculty Job

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More things you shouldn’t say in an interview for a faculty job:

Hey, are you guys real big on all that “sexual harassment” stuff?

Yes, I could teach ancient civ. Two of my former lives were from that period.

Words and language and stuff—that’s my real frotte…er, I mean forthé. Frothy? Forplé?...whatever!

Cartoon by Kerry Soper, Assistant Professor of Humanities, Brigham Young University
What You Wanted To Hear

› Which jobs should you apply for?
› Preparing your application materials
› How to interview
› How to negotiate an offer
› The two-body problem
What Jobs To Apply For?

› Make contacts at conferences
  - it’s not gauche to be upfront that you’re looking for jobs

› Very few positions look like the ‘perfect job’ at first glance
  - but don’t apply for a job if you know enough to know you don’t want it

› Invite yourself to visit institutions
  - it’s much easier to consider moving if you’ve actually been there

› Wide variety of wordings in job ads
  - sometimes standard (but strange) format imposed by institute

› Make contact with someone there; ask them for more info
  - if job says “applicants are encouraged to contact …”, then do it!

› Don't leave things until the last second
  - most jobs now have online (but confusing, clunky) application process
  - deadlines almost always rigid (and factor in time zone difference)
Preparing Your Application

› Choose your referees carefully, and give them 2-4 weeks advance notice
  - if you’re not sure a referee will be unequivocally positive, ask them first

› Cover letter is critical, even if they don’t require it
  - in your own words: why you want the job & why they should want you
  - leave out anything personal at this stage

› Spell check

› Answer each selection criterion separately & explicitly
  - offer a positive/alternative view on criteria you don’t think you meet

› Don’t pad your publication list
  - avoid papers “in prep”; separate out conference papers & abstracts

› Tailor your research & teaching statements to your audience
  - will be obvious if it’s recycled or generic

› **SPELL CHECK!!!**
How To Interview

› Find out who interview panel are, and how long interview is likely to be
  - knowing background & interests of panel can make big difference

› Practice, practice, practice
  - brainstorm questions; have someone drill you until your answers are gold

› Dress well, look presentable, speak clearly, make eye-contact
  - get a non-astronomer to give you the once-over beforehand

› OK to bring notes or to jot down bullet points before answering
  - telegraph & structure your answer; don’t ramble

› Be ready for all the obvious questions
  - greatest strength/weakness; knowledge of employer; difficult conversations

› Have some insightful questions ready to ask of the panel at the end
  - show you’ve done your research; don’t ask about salary

› May have to give a colloquium and/or lecture
  - practice, polish, and don’t run over time
Getting the Offer & Negotiating

› If you’re getting a bad vibe, pick up the phone or set up a meeting
› Visit again; everything will seem different with an offer in hand
› Get clarity on decision date, and whether there’s a waitlist
  - if inflexible, this indicates they don't really have your interests as a priority
  - disclose whether you have competing offers, especially if deadlines clash
› Often they’ll make informal offer first; proceed to contract when you ask for it
› If it's not in writing, it's worth nothing
› OK to negotiate or ask for almost anything
  - salary, parking, start-up package, starting date, initial teaching relief
  - don’t expect they can meet you halfway; some things may be impossible
  - identify your core demands, and develop strong justifications
› Normally they will be enthusiastic & butter you up while an offer is pending
  - level of attention will drop once you accept; don't take this personally!
If the situation is clearly untenable, don’t bother applying
  - e.g. same-sex couple emigrating to the USA
  - e.g. partner is a surgeon, would need to re-qualify overseas

Don’t mention your partner until you’ve got an offer

Find out visa constraints on your partner’s ability to work or study

Don’t expect your potential employer to find a job for your partner
  - ask for contacts and advice, but don’t expect too much

Determine how many salaries you’ll need to support yourselves

Accept that your partner may not be able to look for work until you arrive

Pair wisely! 😊
  - life-scientist, engineer, programmer, sys admin, telecommuter, …
  - astronomer, lawyer, doctor, …