
5 tips on how to navigate the onsite interview for an academic position

Congratulations! You've been selected for an in-person interview for a faculty position. Here is 5 tips to help you make a lasting impression during your interview.

1. Keep your presentation accessible

Your presentation will be a key part of the interview. You should strike a balance between depth and accessibility. Start with a brief introduction about yourself, followed by a high-level introduction and overview of your work. Avoid overwhelming your audience with overly technical details, busy slides, or excessive data and text. Save the more technical aspects for the last portion of your presentation, perhaps the last 5–10 minutes, catering to the experts in the room. Conclude with your visionary outlook for the future, focusing on a 5 year perspective rather than immediate experiments.

Remember, clear communication is key. If your audience struggles to understand your presentation, it can detract from your overall impression. Effective communication is a vital skill for an academic, and your ability to convey complex concepts in a simple manner will be noticed.

There are numerous resources available for improving your presentation skills. For further advice on this topic, I recommend the article "[DeathByPowerpoint.](#)"

The Rule of Three

Breaking your slides into 3 concepts helps to:

- 1 Give a compelling structure to your presentation
- 2 Keep it simple
- 3 Keep your audience engaged



slidemodel.com

[Keep your presentation accessible.](#)

2. Don't forget your role as a lecturer and mentor

It's not just about research. In the world of academia, your responsibilities extend beyond research and publications. As an aspiring academic, remember that you're also being evaluated for your potential as a lecturer and mentor. Your capacity to effectively convey complex ideas to students and guide them on their academic journey is of paramount importance.

During your interview, be prepared to discuss your teaching philosophy and your vision for mentorship. Emphasize your commitment to fostering a supportive learning environment where students can thrive. Showcase your passion for imparting knowledge and nurturing the next generation of scientists. Provide examples from previous mentoring activities. Demonstrating your dedication to both research and education will solidify your image as a well-rounded candidate who can contribute meaningfully to the academic community.

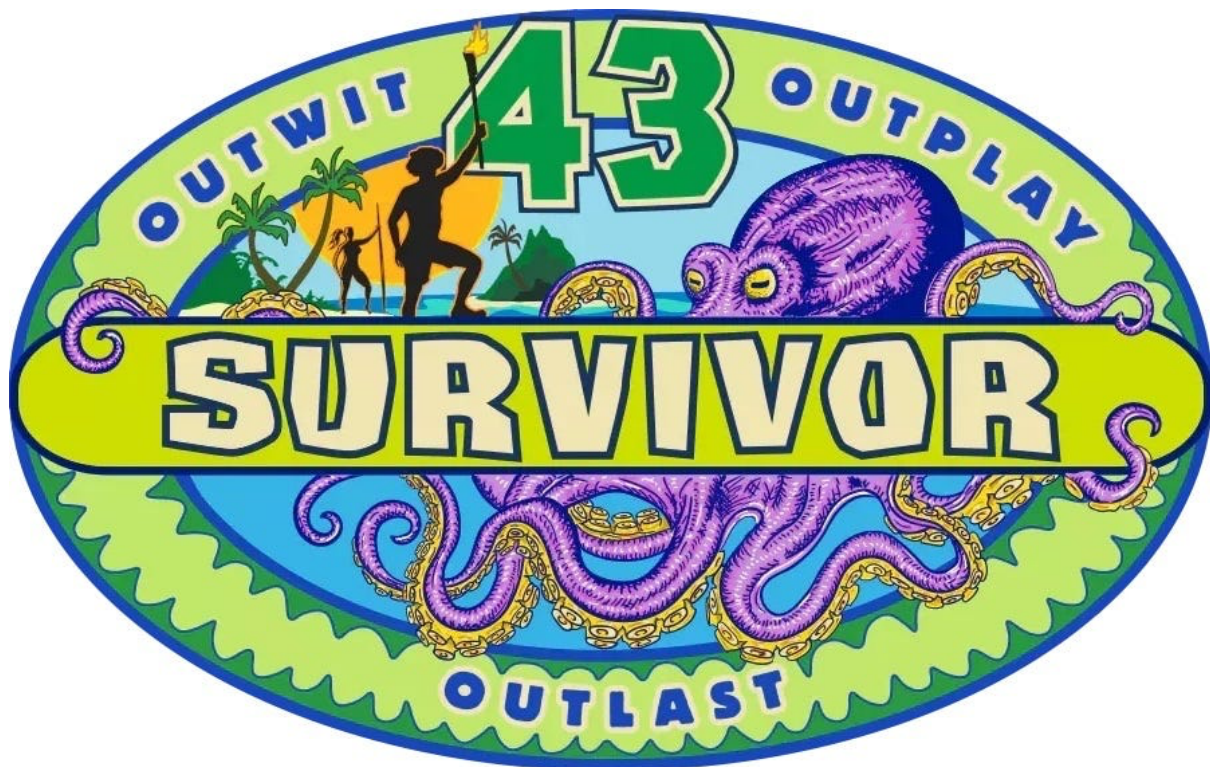
3. Beyond the CV

At this stage, your CV and publication list have already opened doors and took you to the interview stage. Now, it's about the intangibles. Do your homework on your potential future colleagues. Understand their research, interests, and how your expertise could complement theirs. Faculty members often vote based on how they would benefit from a new colleague, so demonstrate your collaborative nature and willingness to engage in fruitful collaborations.

Prepare to answer questions about the broader aspects of the job, such as funding sources, your first grant's focus, your vision for your research group's size, and your expectations for student supervision. Your ability to think beyond your research and consider the larger academic landscape is crucial.

4. Address your weaknesses

At the interview stage, you're competing against a pool of highly qualified candidates. You're more likely to lose the job than win it. It's an elimination game just like in reality TV shows like Survivor. To stand out and avoid being voted out, be prepared to address your weaknesses openly. Anticipate questions related to your potential shortcomings and have well-thought-out responses. I always advise listing all the reasons why they might hesitate to hire you and strategize how to address or mitigate these concerns during the interview.



[Survivor: Don't get voted out.](#)

5. Act and think like a faculty member

Behave like a faculty member, not just a bench scientist. Engage in discussions about broader academic topics during social interactions, such as dinners or informal gatherings. Topics like the publishing crisis, open science, preprints, evolving funding systems, and the politics of science can be conversation starters. Demonstrating your awareness of and contributions to these discussions shows that you're a well-rounded individual ready to contribute to the academic community.

Conclusion

Your onsite interview is a significant opportunity to showcase your qualifications beyond the details in the CV, but it's also a chance to demonstrate your fit within the academic environment. By following these tips and approaching the interview holistically, you can maximize your chances of securing your dream academic position. Good luck!

Other resources

[How to put your best foot forward in faculty job interviews. Somerville et al. Science 2018.](#)

[Succeeding in Academic Interviews.](#)

[Top Ten Tips for Preparing for Academic Interviews.](#)

Acknowledgements

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