

Teaching Demonstrations

PDCO Career Resources

Teaching demos are standard at teaching-focused institutions and may turn up on R1-type campus visits on occasion. In some cases, the teaching demonstration replaces the job talk, and sometimes, it is required in addition to the job talk.

The format of the teaching demo can vary, so be sure to ask what is expected if that information is not provided to you. It may happen in an existing classroom borrowed from a colleague's regularly scheduled class, around a "class" that includes students who were specifically assembled for the purpose of your demonstration, or just a demonstration of your skills given to a group of faculty that serves as a mock class.

When applying for a position in a research institution, a job talk tends to be one of the most important features. For a teaching institution, the most important element is the teaching demonstration. Unlike a job talk, teaching demonstrations are unpredictable. While job talks are structured with presentation followed by a Q&A, teaching demonstrations come with an unknown element: the students. How will they react to your teaching style? Will they ask questions during the lecture? Will they ask questions at all? Prepare for the unknown; this is a true test of your teaching skills.

Researching the Institution

- The most important thing is to determine the general academic level of the student body. Once you know the topic you will be presenting on and the level of the class, you can research similar courses at the institution and get a better idea of typical readings and assignments.
- Do not assume that the students at the teaching demo will behave the same way as the students at your undergraduate university.

Planning your Demonstration Format

- It would be most wise to steer clear of an all-lecture or an all-discussion format.
- Unless given specific instructions, plan to prepare a strong but short lecture, followed by a highly structured discussion or a set of activities that follow the lecture.
- Even if lecturing is not your normal mode of teaching, utilizing it somewhat during the demonstration allows you to demonstrate your classroom authority.
- This is an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of pedagogy (e.g. active learning techniques) and your teaching style.

- You may be asked to suggest a reading for the class. Keep the assigned reading relatively short and updated.

Planning your Topic

- The department may assign you a topic, or they may ask you to choose one.
- Whatever the case, try not to use your research as your topic, as this is something your colleagues will have already heard about in your job or chalk talk.
- Faculty often must teach outside of their research areas. A teaching demo is a chance for you to show your willingness and ability to teach on other topics.

During the Demonstration

- Look up from your notes, keep a close eye on them, but do not read them like a script. Make eye contact with your students. Teach like you will teach your classes.
- Keep a close eye on students, and look for signs of boredom or confusion.
- Encourage all participation.
- Your goal is to draw students out and interact with them like a real professor.
- A strong ending is key to a strong performance: End your demonstration with a good wrap-up, in which you help students understand what they learned, practiced, and discussed that day.
- Conclude your thoughts with time to spare, thank the class for their attention, and bid them farewell.

Additional Resources

- Using powerpoint for your teaching demo ([Click Here](#))
- Essay on giving a teaching demo ([Click Here](#))
- Five tips for having a Successful Teaching Demo ([Click Here](#))