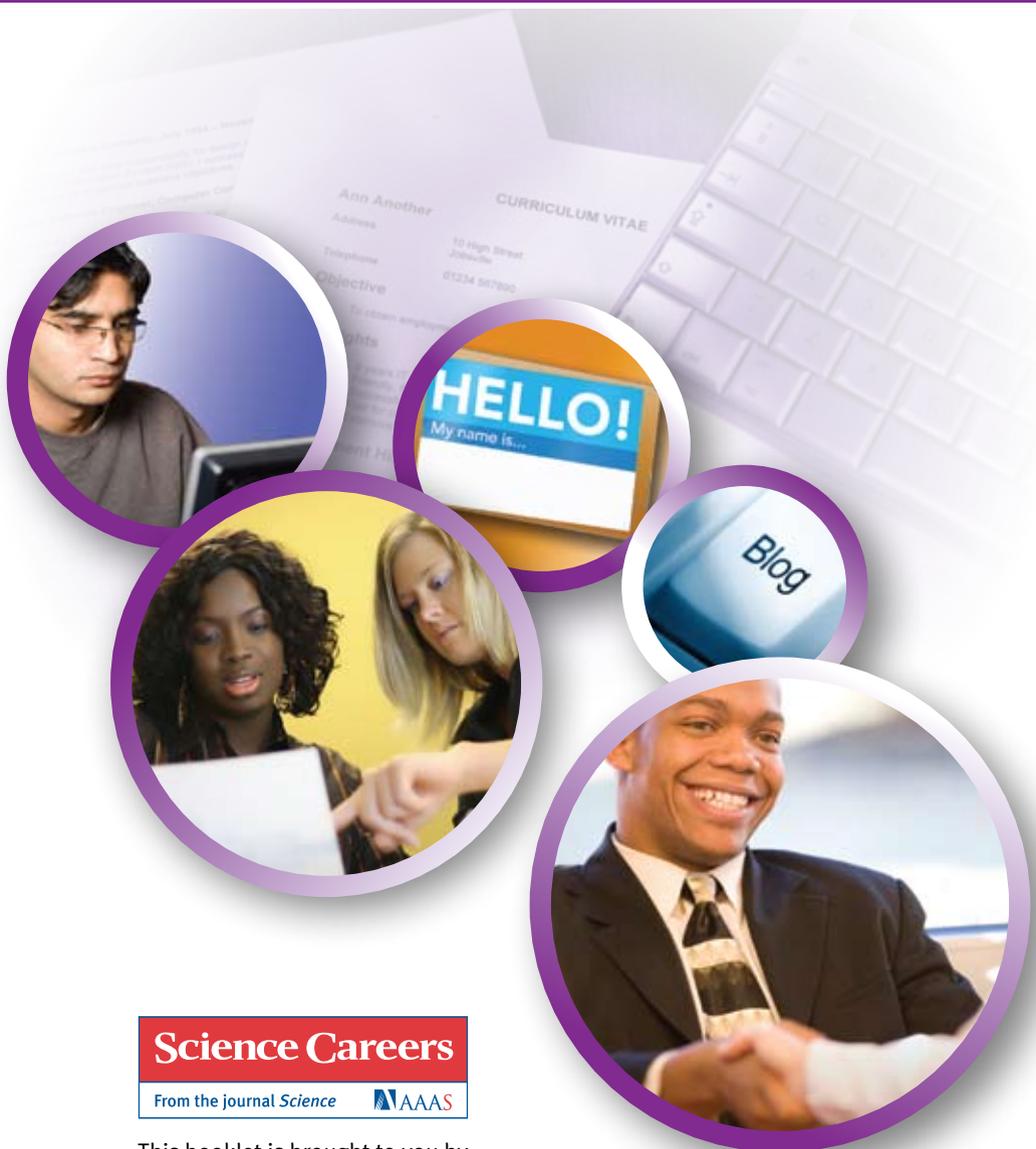


CAREER TRENDS

The Informed
Job Search
Advice for Scientists



Science Careers

From the journal *Science*



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Climbing Out of a Big Pile

When I decided to pursue a career in science, I assumed—as I think many aspiring scientists do in the beginning—that the mastery of a difficult subject would ensure my employability. How could a bright future *not* be guaranteed for people who have mastered powerful analytical tools and, along the way, demonstrated energy, independence, and impressive intellectual attainment?

Of course today I know that finding a good job requires not just excellent credentials but also hard work, stamina, thick skin, and an intelligent approach.

But what does it mean to take an intelligent approach? First: Realize that employers sometimes resort to desperate measures to make a pile of applications smaller. A recent survey showed that most CEOs trash applications that contain a single spelling error, for example.

So don't be an easy mark. Spell-check your resume and CV, use a font of readable size, print your application (if a hard copy is needed) on white or off-white paper—not pink or neon—and generally avoid being cute or provocative.

Next: Don't neglect your “soft” skills. Employers value the ability to put colleagues at ease, to get things done without disturbing the delicate climate of teamwork and cooperation. They value the ability to communicate difficult ideas to technical as well as nontechnical colleagues, and to other audiences. You may think of these as industry skills, but they matter in academia, too.

Finally: While online job-search tools are lovely, if you want to get hired you also need to get out into the real world. Volunteer with professional societies and go to local chapter meetings. Seek opportunities to give talks on other campuses and in other departments. Host a lecture series or start a journal club. Go to conferences, ask good questions, and talk to people.

The point of all this is to set people at ease, to let them rest easy knowing that you will make a fine colleague.

Good luck with your job search.

Jim Austin, Editor
Science Careers



Preparing for Your Post-Ph.D. Career

By Bart Noordam, Patricia Gosling ~ February 22, 2008

Among the most difficult decisions during your Ph.D. is what to do when you're finished. You're probably familiar with the “typical” career track: Ph.D., postdoc, then a climb through the academic ranks of assistant, associate, and full professorship. Any other path is often looked upon with derision by peers, as though leaving academia means you can't handle the academic track.

But this “move up or move out” attitude is a purely academic perspective. Universities don't just train new professors; they prepare people to contribute to society in many ways. In the Netherlands, for example, 60% of Ph.D.s leave university right away to take jobs in corporate, not-for-profit, or government organizations.

Most of the remaining 40% continue their academic careers as postdoctoral fellows. But within 5 years of graduating, half of those will wander off the

academic campus. The picture is the same in other Western countries. So, your career is likely to take you outside the hallowed halls of academia. Get used to the idea.

As you move toward the last months of your Ph.D., consider the full range of employment options. What you do directly after graduation will have a major impact on your professional progression. Evaluating all the options is a lot of work, so allow time to do it properly and start well in advance.

We suggest splitting the job-search process into two parts. First, decide which type of job appeals to you most. Then start the application process, which typically takes several months. You should start evaluating your options at least 6 months before you graduate.

What really makes you tick?

Your education puts you in a position to find a job that not only pays the bills but also provides satisfaction. To discover what type of job will do the trick, analyze what you most enjoyed while working as a Ph.D. student. Was it working in a team of enthusiastic young people exploring unknown (scientific) territories or working to solve a tough problem? Or perhaps you were most excited by the challenge of mastering particular technical skills, learning the multidisciplinary aspects of your project, or teaching. Maybe you were most enthusiastic about the impact your results have (or are likely to have) on society.

At first glance, you may conclude that your particular research topic makes you want to get out of bed in the morning. But after more careful consideration, you're likely to realize that narrower aspects of your project are more important than the topic itself. Ask close friends what they see as your strengths; friends can often see what you were best at and what gave you the most satisfaction, even when you can't see it yourself.

Map out your options

Somehow you need to make sense of all the possibilities—yes, there are lots of them—and discover which path is right for you. A decision tree will give you an overview and help you sort out your long list of options into a shorter list of opportunities worth pursuing further. Ask around the lab to find out what types of jobs previous generations of students have chosen.

Evaluating all the options is a lot of work, so allow time to do it properly and start well in advance.

While growing your own decision tree, you may notice that branches you intuitively ignored (e.g., working for the government) have interesting sub-categories (for instance, working at the patent office). Maybe you're certain you want to be a bench researcher but

Somehow you need to make sense of all the possibilities—yes, there are lots of them—and discover which path is right for you.

thought you'd need to stay in academia. In fact, an accurate decision tree often includes research opportunities in the academic, industrial, and not-for-profit sectors, depending on your research area.

Explore the unknown

So now you know what makes you tick and have a map of options, but you may have only a vague idea of what some of those jobs entail. So explore the less familiar options on your decision tree. If you're considering a job in industry but don't know much about it, visit one or two companies to get a feel for the culture and gain a sense of whether you would enjoy working in such a place. This research will allow you to base your decision on your own observations rather than those of your colleagues. Such "informational interviews" are also great ways to add valuable people to your network. (Shameless plug: You might also search *Science Careers* for articles about types of jobs that you aren't as familiar with.)

Leverage your hidden network

Your network is a great asset in the job search, but do you even have a network? You do, even if you don't realize it. Many Ph.D. students have graduated from your institute in the past, and your supervisor and other staff members will most likely know how to find them. These people will be happy to discuss their current and past employment, especially if you offer to buy them lunch.

Double-check your decision

It may take a while, but it is hoped that your research on the job market will reveal a direction in which you want to head. Double-check this decision by talking to friends, relatives, and close colleagues. Sometimes people who know you have remarkable insight into what will work for you and what won't.

So ask around but keep in mind that some professors may not like the idea of having their star students stray from their own exemplary career paths; they might be biased against jobs outside academia. People working outside universities have lived in both worlds long enough to judge the difference. Yet many people who have left academia are like reformed smokers, pro-industry to the point of tedium. So talk to Ph.D.s working in every sector that you're interested in, then make up your own mind.

Do you want the job?

You've been offered a job. Congratulations! But during the job search, you may have become so anxious about getting a job that you lost sight of whether you really want the position that's offered. So go back to your

decision tree and to the list of things that were really important to you. Consider whether you will enjoy working for this employer, taking full account of your interactions with the people you met during the interview.

Tempted to say “no”? There is no need to take the first job you are offered, but there is a limit to how often you can say no.

Your direction is not carved in stone

If, after working for a while, you feel that you are on the wrong track, consider switching to a different branch of the career tree. There is mobility among the various sectors, so don't feel like you're trapped if you're unhappy. While you restart the job search, make the most of your current job by learning new, practical, and transferable skills.

As a scientist, you are used to tackling complex problems in a systematic way. Finding a job is a complex process requiring a serious commitment of time and smarts. It is worth making the effort to start well before your thesis defense to kick your post-Ph.D. career into high gear.

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The Cold, Hard Truth About Finding a Job in a Down Economy

By David G. Jensen ~ February 20, 2009

Even when the job market is robust, a job-search strategy won't work if you're not using your time effectively and concentrating on methods that actually work. But the world has changed, seemingly overnight. One day, my client list contained many companies interviewing for open positions at all levels; a few weeks later, the same companies put those positions on hold or had moved into layoffs. The speed and intensity of this economic meltdown hit us all by surprise. It's so bad right now that this normally positive thinker is finally agreeing with the naysayers: Times *are* tough!

Still, there are jobs out there—jobs that someone is going to land. This column offers tips for ensuring that you are one of those who complete their job-search mission in a down economy.

The year of the perfect process

In this unforgiving job market, you can't flounder. This is the year to implement the perfect process for your job hunt.

Although the elements of your process will differ depending on your specific needs and the targeted job, there is some common ground. Here are a few items you should consider as you sit down to plan your job-search strategy:

- You must plan on a truly significant effort. Postdocs or new grads often invest only 20 to 30 minutes a day in their job search. In a down economy, that will get you a few “thank you” responses from human resources—and little else. If you aren't spending 2 hours a day on your search, you're unlikely to get any kind of traction at all.
- You need to search for jobs using all means possible—anything that is relevant to your situation: responding to journal ads, headhunters, or Internet job postings; attending job fairs; networking and informational interviewing. Gone are the days of using only one of these channels and succeeding. You can't count on 100 Internet job applications or on networking alone. You've got to have all the bases covered.
- This year, you will need to invest not only time but also money in your job search. Employers will be offering fewer out-of-town interview trips, so you may have to risk some of your capital to visit two or three companies over several days in an area.

In this unforgiving job market, you can't flounder. This is the time to implement the perfect process for your job hunt.

- I always mention the importance of a plan B. In this job market, you also need plans C and D. Interested in a research job in the medical-products industry? Fine. But make sure you're also applying to positions in the consulting industry and any other segment in which work appropriate for you goes on. For example,

perhaps you also meet the qualifications for an available bench position with a food-industry employer. Apply for it. But keep in mind that every type of employer requires a different version of your well-written CV.

Huge loads of perseverance

Let's say you've got a great plan and you are attacking all sectors. What you're going to get back from that huge outlay of time and effort may not look like it was worth the investment. This is the point at which the second key element of a job search in a down economy comes into play: perseverance.

You'll put in three times as much effort this year than you did, or would have, last year to generate the same number of job leads. And when they show up

Your mental outlook—the most critical element in the job search—will either keep you open for new opportunities or close your mind and seal your fate.

at your door, you don't just have to recognize them; you must also have the ability to recover when they don't pan out. I can't tell you how to bounce back; you'll need to experience that yourself. Be assured that rejection will hurt—but it will make you a better job seeker, as long as you take the appropriate lesson from every bump.

Perhaps you've just had an embarrassing phone conversation with a networking contact, or your third hard-earned interview went by without so much as a follow-up call from the employer. Your natural instinct may be to pull back and start looking at yet another postdoc or to limit yourself to Internet job applications. Don't allow those instincts to rule! Each negative experience holds a lesson. How could you have made that phone contact go more smoothly? What can you learn about yourself from interviews that haven't resulted in offers? (In a recession like this one—indeed, even in good times—many of us have a tendency to not look too closely at bad news. But there are good lessons inside those negative experiences.)

I've always considered perseverance to be one of my strongest attributes, but 2009 has really tested me—and it's only February. I've had to resort to extraordinary measures when I am making networking calls or trying to sell my executive-search services to employers. In fact, I sometimes push to the point at which I risk being considered a pest by others along the way. It's a fine line. In times like these, you have to push hard, but you also have to know when to stop. Here are some of my recommendations about how aggressive to get, and when to call it quits:

- While networking, don't stop when one or two calls are not returned. Continue calling without leaving voicemail messages until you reach the person you want to talk to at his or her desk. If messages must be left (or if you are using e-mail), remember that three attempts should be your limit. Anyone who has had three messages from you and hasn't replied is not going to be a willing resource.
- Push past online job applications when company HR departments don't respond. Turn up every contact you can possibly make at the company to identify the hiring manager and state your case directly to that person.
- You can't rely on memory to remind you to make follow-up calls. Make a habit of entering all follow-up timelines into a calendar program, whether it resides on your computer, on the Internet (Google Desktop, Me.com), or on paper. I use Apple's iCal program on my desktop, which communicates with my iPhone for mobile reminders no matter where I am.

- The extent of contacts you'll need to make in a down economy means that you'll want to develop a contact database as well, whether it's a simple Excel spreadsheet or something akin to a relational database. Software programs like ACT! (PC) or Daylite (Mac) combine the calendar program suggested above with a great way to manage your relationships and networking contacts. You'll appreciate programs like these when you find yourself with much more data to manage than you've ever had before.

A positive attitude

Your mental outlook—the most critical element in the job search—will either keep you open for new opportunities or close your mind and seal your fate. It's really easy to be negative about things this year. In fact, some experts believe that the economic downturn would be much less severe if there wasn't such a negative view promulgated by the media. I believe that one's attitude *does* affect the physical world around them. At least, that's the case for the job seeker.

So, knowing it's a lousy job market out there, what facts can you keep in mind that can help you have positive expectations for your job search? First of all, remember that all recessions have a beginning, a middle, and an end. So do job searches. Very few qualified people engage in a job search of the type described in this column without achieving their goals, or some satisfactory equivalent of those goals.

Your new job is out there, even in the current market. Grumble about the economy all you want, but when it comes to the job search, start digging and don't stop until you've got what you were looking for!

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The One-Minute Talk

By Victoria McGovern ~ March 13, 2009

When someone asks you who you are and what you do—whether it's a random stranger on a conference elevator (who may just end up being your next boss), or a Nobel Prize-winner sitting next to you at dinner after an on-campus lecture—your answer needs to be clear, crisp, accurate, interesting, informative, pleasant, friendly, optimistic, articulate, and succinct all in a single, relaxed burst of speech measured in seconds, not minutes. You need to say all the things you mean to say without going off course; rambling; giggling; stumbling over your words; speaking to your navel instead of the person you're supposed to be addressing; mocking yourself; inadvertently insulting the person you're meeting or his or her place of employment, country, family, or favorite athletic team; spilling your coffee; forgetting to breathe; apologizing for being unworthy; or stating unequivocally that your scientific work is irrelevant, small, and likely to burst into flames at any moment.

When you introduce yourself, you must give a tiny talk, full of facts about yourself and your work without forgetting that the entire moment is about not you, but, rather, this person to whom you are speaking.

Only a moment

When it's time to introduce yourself, you typically get only a moment. At that moment, all eyes are on you. How do you make the most of your moment? Or, at least, how can you avoid embarrassing yourself or making your science seem dull, trivial, inane, or wrong?

With a little forethought, you can become more confident at delivering the “one-minute talk.” That’s good, because over the next few years you will find yourself giving this talk over and over again, to peers and senior scientists at meetings, to seminar speakers who have come to visit your institution, to visiting dignitaries or new recruits you may be asked to shepherd from place to place. And if you manage to hang on and establish a career in science—and probably even if you don’t—you’ll give versions of this talk hundreds, maybe thousands of times over the next 30 to 40 years.

Who, what, why, and why

When you meet someone new in a professional context, your goal should be to communicate four things: who you are, what you do, why you’re meeting them, and most of all, why they should care that they are meeting you. A little reflection will help you develop your opening lines and find natural answers to these four questions. Thinking about the particular words you will use to start these tiny talks will help you be more at ease in professional conversations. Then, once you’ve got those answers mapped out, try them out at every opportunity. Seek out strangers in scientific settings and practice. A little practice can make a tremendous difference on the type of impression you make and how lasting it is. And that can make a big difference in your professional life.

The personal introduction is a tiny speech, but it’s more than that; it’s an exercise in fulfilling expectations. Your one-minute talk is part of a common transaction, which, just like a knock-knock joke or a waltz, has an expected rhythm that leads both participants through the ever-changing terrain of the exchange. In science, you’re likely to find yourself, more often than not, conversing with someone who’d rather be writing code, plating gels, or hiding in the bathroom. You can win points by keeping to that expected rhythm, allowing your partners-in-conversation to remain comfortable and at ease—or as comfortable and at ease as it is possible for them to be.

The seminar lunch

The seminar lunch is one important occasion during which you can practice giving your one-minute speech. There you sit at a table full of napkins, water glasses, menus, and other obstacles, with The Biggest Person in Your Field or a Nobel Prize-winner seated to your left. The group sits and pleasantries are exchanged: “This seems like a nice place.” Or “How was your flight into town?” Menus are fiddled with; a waiter appears; drinks are served. Some members of the group cower behind menus; others look out the window; some guzzle caffeine; at least one is furtively fingering a BlackBerry under the table. The speaker, who seems comparatively approachable, turns to you. She looks you in the eye and starts the show: “So what are you working on?”

What do you do? First, relax. No matter how important the guest is, he or she is just a person. Trite as it may sound, that observation is a key to becoming

comfortable around intimidating people and allowing them to be comfortable, too. Be calm. Take a moment to think through what you want to say. The story you tell should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Who are you? What do you do? Why are you here? Why should the person you’re speaking to care?

Breathe, then start talking. Say your name clearly and indicate your status—student, postdoc, whatever. Mention what lab you work in. Then frame your work with the big picture: what you’re interested in, how you approach it, and how it got you an invite to this lunch. Look the other person in the eye as you speak. If the angle is bad, pull out your chair slightly so that you can address Nobel Laureate face-on. Don’t glare like a vulture, just make eye contact—“check in” often to see if her face registers understanding, engagement, or a strong desire to ask a question. Pause if there seems to be a question brewing. Finish up by connecting what you’ve said back to the guest’s interests or work. When you’re done, stop talking and smile a natural smile. The guest might ask a question or just nod and shift his or her glance to the next person at the table, indicating that it’s time for them to give their own introductions. You’re off the hot seat.

But what if things go wrong? What if you spill your water on the other person? Just apologize and hand over your napkin. What if the speaker turns to you just as you unhinge your jaw and commit wholeheartedly to an ear of corn? Just as you would at a big family dinner, raise your eyebrows, shrug your shoulders, and shift your eyes toward the person sitting next to you—the international signal for “skip me and come back when I don’t have my mouth full.”

What if you say your name incorrectly, forget where you work or what you work on, or can’t even bring yourself to speak? It happens. Relax. Bobbling the one-minute speech is rarely fatal. If you start speaking and nothing comes out right, it’s fine to acknowledge that you’re nervous and start over. It’s just us humans here, so focus, relax, breathe, and make sure that you keep the second try short. Smile. Look ’em in the eye. Be confident that you know yourself and your science, and begin to speak.

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Jobs 2.0: Making Social Networking Work for You

By José M. Fernández ~ September 15, 2009

Looking for a job is often stressful. Understandably, many would prefer to update their profile on their favorite social network rather than pour through job sites in search of a position that fits their qualifications. With the right mindset, social networks can help you land your dream job. Used thoughtlessly, however, these tools could cost you a job offer or even get you fired. This article aims to help you use social media to your advantage in the job search and avoid mistakes that may be professionally harmful.

Job search or people search?

Not too long ago, online job boards—like the one at *Science Careers*—were all the rage. Today, these boards remain an important—even essential—job search tool. Just enter a few keywords and have job listings delivered directly to your e-mail inbox.

But no set of keywords will ensure that you never miss a posted position. Relevant job openings can come out of nowhere, in industries you never

thought of, labeled with unfamiliar keywords. And not every job is posted online. Social media tools can provide innovative ways to leverage your network to help you find that ideal job.

After he was laid off from his position at a videoconferencing manufacturer last year, engineer Erik Werner used Facebook's status feeds to announce his new situation to his friends, who helped get him interviews. He used LinkedIn to connect to industry contacts, and Twitter as a "listening post" to keep tabs on industry news and opportunities.

Such an approach transforms the job search into a "people search," says Dan Schawbel, author of *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success*. "To have a friend refer you to a potential employer says a lot about you, and makes you stand out from the stack of resumes downloaded from the Internet," adds Werner.

Properly utilized, the web's social features are powerful tools that can save work and time. In the pre-Facebook/LinkedIn/Twitter days, Werner says he used "the shotgun approach to job hunting... I was putting out 10 resumes a day, 5 days a week for 5 months. This time around, I may have put out about a total of 20-30 and had an offer letter within a month."

Twitter

- micro-blogging service
- 140-character status updates
- users can upload their e-mail address books
- follow companies and individuals
- keep up-to-date with industry news
- publish feeds that brand your professional goals
- <http://help.twitter.com/portal>

The chief advantage of the web's social technologies is the tools they provide for extending, formalizing, and utilizing your network of personal and professional relationships. "Online networking allows us to find and develop network contacts in a completely different way than before," says Alba. Just like mingling at a live networking event, job seekers can utilize social media to expand their reach, learn about new opportunities, and gain the confidence of future employers and colleagues.

One point experts disagree on is how wide a net you should cast when you go fishing for new contacts. Alison Doyle, author of *Internet Your Way to a New Job*, is from the less-is-more camp. "It's

important to be selective—connect with people who can help your career and who you know," argues Doyle. She goes on to say, "The first question you should ask yourself when making connections while job searching is how can the person I'm asking to connect, help me?" For example, determining whether the potential contact is in the same discipline as you, or whether you have a common bond like a mutual colleague whom you could ask for an introduction. Professional networks like LinkedIn are especially designed

for professional connections. Just click on the “get introduced through a connection” link on the bottom of that person’s LinkedIn profile. Having a selective network means having a targeted contact list when you need help.

Other experts say it’s better to have a large pool of contacts to draw on. *Science Careers* contributor Brooke Allen advocates what he calls “promiscuous networking.” He has thousands of online contacts, which he began cultivating long before the age of Facebook and LinkedIn. Schawbel says that maintaining a large number of connections can increase your credibility, causing you to “appear well networked.” Also, having a large network means that you have more people to call on when you do need something.

Getting on the radar

Many companies are increasingly using social networks in creative ways to connect with job seekers, such as hosting Twitter feeds announcing their job postings—Raytheon (@Raytheon_Jobs) is just one example. Services like TwitHire, Facebook’s Marketplace, or MySpace’s Classifieds aim to connect job seekers with employers. Such services may be worth trying. And don’t forget about special-purpose networks, like *Science Careers*’ own forum (scforum.aas.org), which encourages jobseekers to advise each other on a range of issues.

LinkedIn

- professional social network
- user profile resembles a resume
- users can upload their e-mail address books
- discover mutual connections
- discover connections that may be two or more degrees of freedom apart
- users leverage their own and each other’s contacts
- users post requests on like-minded groups or their own profiles
- <http://press.linkedin.com/about>

Besides, “I’ve heard that some companies are decreasing their job posting and recruiter fees because of how accessible candidates are to them in LinkedIn,” says Jason Alba, CEO of JibberJobber.com and author of *I’m on LinkedIn – Now What???* (imonlinkedinnowwhat.com). LinkedIn—and the more familiar Facebook—are rapidly becoming at least as essential as job boards to a successful online job search.

Once you’ve established those online contacts, what do you do with them? Keep them informed of your professional status using tools the social web provides: tweets, Facebook posts, and status feeds. What job seekers post on their profile says a lot about them. These occasional posts shape your personal brand and speak volumes about your professional interests.

You can also show your willingness to help your colleagues. Think of your network, and the social web generally, as a group of people who agree to help each other to advance some common interest. So focus on sowing seeds, not harvesting help: Offer to help others, and provide help when it’s requested. On social media sites, giving can be as easy as posting links to new funding opportunities, articles of interest, and job openings. Or you can be more direct and offer, for example, a contact for grant writing assistance. Whatever the situation, “your connections are more likely to return the favor when you’ve offered to help them,” according to Doyle. Utilize your contacts—en masse or one at a time—when you need an introduction, a contact inside a company, or on-the-ground advice from someone in a particular field.

Your online identity

New to social networking? For starters, you need to develop an online presence that will help you—and won’t hurt you—in your job search. Craft your online identity through your profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook, and other sites—honestly, of course, but with a positive spin.

Facebook

- nonprofessional social network
- users can upload their e-mail address books
- discover mutual connections
- exchange links, photos, and more
- join like-minded groups
- in a professional context, users can leverage their own and each other’s contacts
- http://www.facebook.com/help/new_user_guide.php

Don’t forget that your online presence goes well beyond your profiles. It’s the sum of all things written by you or about you online, including friend’s party pictures, journal articles, news articles and press releases that mention you, blog posts, and Twitter tweets. Sites like Facebook were not designed to be used professionally. If you are going to use these sites for job hunting, you must either keep it professional or keep them private. This means using their privacy features, typically found under their settings menu, untagging or removing embarrassing photographs, and even asking your friends to avoid posting unprofessional content with your name on it.

The web is a powerful tool for employers, too—and they use it not just to expand, but also to shrink, their lists of potential new hires. Yes, they are watching you, or at least you should assume they are. “Hiring managers and recruiters are checking out candidates on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites,” Doyle says.

So, just as you do when mingling at a live networking event, you should be mindful of your appearance, use contacts judiciously, and manage your

personal brand diligently and intelligently. Exercise discretion in what you post, and remove anything online that may cast you in an unprofessional light, if you can. Avoid posting controversial opinions on blogs or other sites. And in a public (or even private) online venue, avoid badmouthing a competitor's paper, or a company that didn't offer you an interview or a job.

Log out and get out

An expertly crafted online persona, the active use of appropriate social networks, and a variety of online contacts can get your proverbial foot in the door. But that's just the first step; the next is to put your real feet inside real doors. It should be stressed that, though far preferable to delivering a one-minute elevator talk to a total stranger, longing for the safety and security of an online avatar should not be a replacement for real-world networking. Hiding behind a computer can be a serious job-hunting mistake. For now and for the foreseeable future, the most important interactions still happen in the real world, not online—so prepare well for those live interviews, and get yourself out among your professional colleagues at lectures, conferences, and social events. If you're going to be visiting an unfamiliar city on business, find out which of your online connections live there and invite them out to dinner. These live interactions are what will carry you over the finish line.

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José Fernández manages social networking efforts for *Science Careers*.

Additional Resources

Science Careers Facebook Fan Page
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Making the Most of Career Fairs

By Garth Fowler ~ December 9, 2005

I attended my first career fair unintentionally. I was at a conference, and as I walked past one of the meeting rooms on my return from lunch I saw tons of people standing in long lines in front of small tables. I was willing—maybe eager—to skip the next series of talks, so I decided to investigate. I walked up to one of the few tables with no line and asked the woman behind it what was happening. “It’s a career fair,” she replied. “Are you looking for a job?”

What a lucky break! Without even trying, I was about to start my job search. So I spent the afternoon answering questions about what kind of research I did and what type of jobs I might want, but my answers weren’t well thought-out. I knew nothing about the companies attending and I had no strategy. But I collected a wealth of useless items like refrigerator magnets, key-chain flashlights, and business cards, and when the afternoon ended I felt great: The recruiters knew me now, so it was only a matter of time until one of them called me up and offered me a great job. Or so I thought.

Back at the lab it was business as usual. No phone calls. I didn’t follow up because I couldn’t remember the names of any of the recruiters—I had lost or thrown out those business cards—or, worse yet, the companies they worked for. Not remembering the recruiters’ names wasn’t such a big deal, however. What really mattered, I realized, was that the recruiters didn’t remember *me*. I had not given them a reason to. On the recruiters’ radar screens I had been a tiny, temporary blip.

Career fairs, I concluded, were a waste of time, and indeed they are if you approach them the way I did. But I knew people then—and I know more now—who have gotten leads and even jobs via career fairs. I began to wonder: Why had my experience been so different?

The most common mistake

“The most common mistake,” says Marc Mascolo, a recruiter for Johnson & Johnson, “is being unprepared.” Mascolo has spent hundreds of hours talking with young scientists at career fairs around the country. He has seen many qualified and talented scientists come and go without making an impression or finding a job.

So what does it mean to be prepared in a career-fair context? It means knowing yourself and your prospective employers. Introspection and self-assessment can be painful, but they cannot be avoided. You have to invest time, energy, and possibly some anguish in figuring out what—precisely—you want to do with your life. Working out effective answers to several key questions, like these, is the first step:

- What type of job are you looking for right now?
- What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?
- What skills and abilities can you offer an employer?
- What evidence can you provide for the quality of your work?

Once you’ve answered these questions—a process that should take a decade or two at most—you’re ready to progress to step two: finding out what companies will be attending the career fair and what jobs they have open. Most career-fair organizers create a list of the companies scheduled to attend and post it on a website. Find that list, study it, and find out what jobs are available at the companies you’re most interested in; often there’s a link on the Web site for each company. Then figure out what kind of people they’re looking for and what jobs you think you might like to fill.

What if you find an interesting company but it doesn’t have jobs right now that match with your abilities and interests? You might be tempted to apply for jobs you’re not interested in on the theory that it might give you a foot in the door. Don’t. Employers hire scientists who know what they want. Interviewers can sense your lukewarm interest or, worse yet, they might not sense it and you might get a job you don’t especially want—not a promising strategy for a rewarding career. Instead, study the company, then meet with their representatives at the career fair. Be prepared with personal, sincere answers to questions the interviewers are likely to ask you. Let them know what kind of job you’re looking for, and impress them with your seriousness, focus, and strong credentials.

So what are those likely questions? Here are a few you should be prepared for. Most are easy, but the last two—especially the last one—may require some introspection.

- What kind of research have you carried out?
- What experimental techniques have you mastered?
- Are you willing to relocate, and if so, where?
- When can you start?
- Why are you interested in our company?
- The dreaded TMAY: “Tell me about yourself.”

TMAY isn’t really a question; it’s a request, or a command. What it really is, is an opportunity to present your immaculately and meticulously prepared self-marketing pitch in a spontaneous and engaging way. (Dave Jensen has addressed the TMAY statement in a Tooling-Up column; check it out, and create your TMAY right away).

As you prepare your TMAY response—and your answers to the other standard questions—be concise and avoid technical jargon. “Rambling is a big no-no,” says Lisa Anderson, a recruiter from Transform Pharmaceuticals. Rambling is often caused by not having thought enough about the answer to your question, or by failing to deliver that well-rehearsed pitch. If you find yourself rambling, take a second to remember what you practiced and quickly get back on track. “Also recognize that not all recruiters are scientists,” Anderson continues, adding that communicating technical information to nontechnical people is a core career skill in the corporate world, and something recruiters will be looking for.

Be presentable

Sometimes we scientists get so carried away doing our best work, or presenting that work in the best possible light, that we forget to bathe (or maybe that is just me). One of the keys to getting any job is to present *yourself* with the same meticulous care that you present your work. Companies need scientists with great technical skill and training, *and* employees with great social and group skills. The career fair is a recruiter’s first opportunity to judge you not just as a scientist, but also as a potential colleague. And no one wants to work with someone who...well, smells bad, or can’t comb their hair or button their shirt up straight. To make a good first impression you must:

- Dress professionally—business casual is typical, no jeans or T-shirts. For men, a tie never hurts. Women (and men!) should dress well but not provocatively: Save the sexy outfits for the dance floor.
- Ask the recruiter’s name and then remember it. If you have a hard time remembering names, buy a mnemonics book and practice.
- As you approach the front of the line, remove your hand from your pocket and unclench it to let it dry out; no one wants to shake a sweaty hand. Then give the recruiter’s hand a firm, solid shake; there’s no need to inflict injury.
- Look the recruiter in the eye, not at your feet, or theirs.
- Be polite: Say please, thank you, you’re welcome, and so on.

- Be enthusiastic about your work, but don't fake it. Keep it on a low boil, but don't pretend you don't care.

Your time with a recruiter is more conversation than interview. What you say is important, but what you hear—and retain—is at least as important. Show the recruiter that you've been listening. Paraphrase what you've been told and integrate what you've learned into new, insightful questions. Think of it as ad-libbing a short summary at the end of one of your experiments, but with more spontaneity and color. Remember: Conversations are not planned, they evolve.

Be active

When you leave the career fair at the end of the day, you're not done: The execution of your self-marketing plan is just beginning. So what is the next step? The follow-up. I developed a method where I immediately went to a quiet place with all the business cards and fact sheets I had gathered and mentally retraced my steps through the fair. I jotted down notes about the conversations I had with each recruiter, and figured out the best way to follow up with each: sending a resume, calling a hiring manager, or sending a short thank-you note. This is where my follow-up plan took shape. It never took more than 20 minutes, and once I had a plan, the rest was easy.

Be practiced

Every company wants to hire confident, accomplished new employees. Hopefully you've got "confident" and "accomplished" covered, but to become a new employee you have to make a good impression, and no matter how spontaneous and intuitive you are, the best way to do that is to practice. I wasted my first career fair, but over time my performance improved. So now you're in a position to learn from my mistakes and make the most of your first—or perhaps your next—career fair.

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Writing a Winning Cover Letter

By John K. Borchardt ~ March 10, 2006

Your curriculum vitae cover letter is both an introduction and a sales pitch. "It should show what sets this individual apart from all others," advises Professor Jeffrey Stansbury, chair of the faculty search committee at the Department of Craniofacial Biology of the University of Colorado School of Dentistry in Denver. Like any good sales pitch, your cover letter should motivate the customer to learn more about the product—in this case, you.

A good cover letter, like a good sales pitch, has several characteristics. First, like a good doctor, it does no harm; it avoids making a negative impression. Second, it demonstrates that the product suits the consumer's—your future employer's—specific needs. Third, it assures the customer that the quality of the product (you!) is superb. Accomplishing all this is easier said than done. So how do you write a cover letter that will do you justice and earn an interview? First you need a plan.

The objective

"A successful candidate impresses the committee right off with the cover letter and makes the committee members actually want to dig through the

CV and recommendation letters to pull out the details that start to validate the positive claims,” says Stansbury. “It also provides a glimpse into the applicant’s personality and gives some guidance as to whether or not they can communicate in an organized, effective way.”

One of the most important jobs of any good sales pitch is to avoid doing harm. Some cover letters, says Robert Horvitz, chair of MIT’s Biology Department search committee, may inadvertently convey negative impressions of a candidate, especially if they “look sloppy or indicate an inability to communicate in English.” “These things can kill someone’s chances,” adds Kenton Whitmire, chair of the Chemistry Department at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

Horvitz adds that cover letters “should be neat and professional” and fit on one page. Whitmire would allow applicants a bit more room; the letter, he says, should be “no longer than one to two pages.” To keep it short, “the cover letter should not reproduce the information in the CV, publications list, or other documents provided,” says Whitmire, “but it should be used as a vehicle to highlight those things that the candidate believes will make him/her a good match for the position at hand.”

The match

An effective cover letter doesn’t just emphasize your best qualities; it also shows how well those qualities are likely to mesh with the open position. “Applicants should begin by reading advertisements for faculty positions carefully and be sure that their background and goals are appropriate for the position in question. You lose credibility if you can’t make a case that you fit the ad,” says Whitmire. “If the cover letter is to be effective, it must definitely be tailored to the particular institution.”

“There’s no excuse for not writing a cover letter that shows how your education, experience, and interests fit with what the institution is seeking,” warns Julia Miller Vick, co-author of the *Academic Job Search Handbook* (University of Pennsylvania Press, July 2001). “Not doing this would reflect laziness,” observes Horvitz. At best, adds Vick, “a form letter or one that is generic doesn’t accomplish much and leaves how the application is reviewed completely up to the reviewing committee.” At worst, a generic cover letter can make you seem undesirable.

“While many people applying for academic positions tend to think that the review process is an evaluation of their previous work—how good is it?—the issue that is as important is the match,” says Whitmire. “How will this person fit in here? The former is necessary, but the decision to interview will often be made upon research area or some other measure of fit to the department’s needs at that moment in time.”

Planning

Begin by learning about the department in general and the open position in particular. Department websites are a good starting point, but don’t stop there; go beyond the public information and seek a sense of perspective. “It is best if candidates speak with their advisers/mentors to get some feel for the institution where they wish to apply,” Whitmire suggests. Close senior colleagues can serve the same purpose. Read beyond the job ad and figure out what they’re really looking for.

Once you’ve got a fix on the institution, the department, and the open position, ask yourself what abilities or special qualities a candidate needs to excel in that position. Then determine which of your qualifications and accomplishments will particularly interest this department. Think about your research plans, past research accomplishments, special projects, and previous employment.

What evidence can you put forward that your background and plans prepare you well for this opening? How well do your research interests match those described in the advertisement? How well will they complement the work of the current faculty? How will your presence there make the department better? All this information will determine what to emphasize in your cover letter.

Writing the body of the letter

Your research accomplishments and plans should constitute the body of your cover letter for a research university position. At institutions where teaching is the primary emphasis, your primary focus should be your teaching experience, philosophy, and goals—and the suitability of your research program to a teaching-focused environment.

“An outline of plans for teaching and research needs to be specific to be meaningful,” says Stansbury. Focus on your most important two or three examples of proposed research projects and innovative teaching plans such as developing novel courses. These examples should change from one cover letter to another as you customize your letters for different jobs.

The opening

After the body of your cover letter has been drafted, you come to the most critical step: writing an attention-getting introduction. Salespeople call this “having a handle.” Your handle is what you offer that makes you especially well qualified for a particular faculty opening. For example, summarizing how well your research interests match those the department advertised provides an effective letter opening.

The opening paragraph should be short but more than just one sentence. After you’ve captured the reader’s attention with the handle, clearly but

briefly summarize your most important—and relevant—qualifications. Anything less than a sharp focus, and your readers will quickly lose interest and move on to the next manila folder.

Closing the letter

End your letter decisively. Don't let it meander to an indefinite or weak close. A strong close projects an image of you as an assertive, confident, and decisive person. It never hurts to close by requesting an interview.

Editing

Make your cover letter an example of your best writing by editing it carefully. It must be easy to read. Focus and clarity of expression in your letter imply focus and clarity of thought—very desirable qualities in a faculty member.

Then return to the critical issue—whether your research interests, other qualifications, and personality meet the search committee's requirements. Anything that doesn't accentuate the match should be ruthlessly deleted.

Then set your letter aside for a day or two before editing it again. The detachment you gain from this short break will help you see what you've written more clearly. Detachment makes it easier to determine whether your paragraphs flow smoothly from one to the next. The logic that seemed so obvious when you were writing may seem much less so a day or two later. Carefully review both your cover letter and CV to be sure the information in them is perfectly consistent. Often, a committee won't bother to try to resolve any discrepancies they find; they'll just move on to the next application.

Finally, Whitmire advises, "be sure to have your cover letter reviewed by someone [who] can be trusted and who has experience. Often, getting a second opinion about how something sounds to the reader—i.e., what they got from reading the letter, not what you intended in writing it—can be very valuable."

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Put Some Muscle Into Your Marketing Materials

By David G. Jensen ~ February 15, 2008

This is not a "resume or CV" article. I'm not a fan of those. In fact, I'll usually decline when asked to do a talk about that subject on a campus. My reasoning is that many scientists put too much emphasis on the appearance of their paperwork. They fuss, write, and rewrite over and over again when they should be attending meetings, making phone calls, or engaging in some other, more productive activity.

As I've written before, a good resume is better than a great resume because it's out there working for you while the great one is still being analyzed and revised. Because I don't want to feed that frenzy, I'll concentrate on helping you get your job-search paperwork up to the "good" stage. You can take it from there with your always-improving networking skills.

Some resume and CV topics are still controversial

Regrettably, the world is full of resume and CV ideologues. If you are a "one-pager" person, you believe that nothing in the world is more wrong than a multipage CV and vice versa. You can read conflicting advice in every resume book in the Library of Congress, and there are more than a thousand on that shelf.

A CV is typically a laundry list of facts and information about a person. As a sales document, it doesn't have a lot going for it. And that's really what your paperwork is—a tool to get you an interview and a shot at a job. The CV is a no-BS biographical sketch, and that's what academia expects. Some

marketing-shy, just-the-facts academic types apply the same approach to their cover letters as well. Sometimes that dry approach works, I suspect, and sometimes it doesn't.

But when these scientists transfer their “just the facts” CV style into their industry applications and resumes, that's just plain wrong. Industry readers are looking for more than that. Your writing style for the industry application, including your cover letter, says something about you. Your choice of words, your selection of powerful phrases and descriptions—these things either work for you or they work against you.

The key is to focus on their interests, not yours

In academia, a CV is an exhaustive (and exhausting!) list of accomplishments: education, employment, awards, presentations, publications, grants—anything you ever did in a professional context. In industry, the most familiar document is the resume. Like a CV, a traditional resume is a list of accomplishments, but it's typically more stylized and selective—and it's *far* shorter. Although the one-page resume has its fans, CVs (for experienced scientists with loads of grants and publications) can run 20 to 30 pages long, or even longer. And although an academic CV is usually just a list, a resume may deviate from the list approach, including, for example, an “Objective” statement at the top.

If you're targeting an industry science position, I recommend an approach that's a little bit different. I call this slightly embellished document an “industry CV.” The industry CV should paint a more compelling picture of your capabilities than an academic CV does and be shorter. It should be longer than a resume but more focused on the needs of the employer than most resumes or CVs. That's where powerful writing, and editing, come in.

Consider the “Objective” statement that some people put on their resumes. It's better than nothing, I guess, but really, employers care about their own objectives, not yours. That hiring manager is thinking, “I've got a job to fill here. All I need to know is, can this person handle the work involved.”

A more powerful approach is to include a “Qualifications” statement, tailored to fit the particular job you're applying for. Consider everything you know about the job and craft a statement about why you're a good fit. If you can convince your CV reader, who spends an average of 20 to 30 seconds with each package, that you can fill their needs, you'll move into the short stack.

So, don't write:

..... *Objective: Research microbiologist with 3 years of postgraduate research in gene expression and metabolism of E. coli would like to apply knowledge within an industry setting. Seeking a Research Scientist position in a growing biotechnology company, preferably in the Northeast.*

Few hiring managers are going to be eager to pay you to “apply knowledge within an industry setting.” They've got particular problems they want you to solve. So write something more directly related to the employer's needs, such as this:

..... *Qualified By: Three years of experience increasing yields of E. coli secondary metabolites in computer-controlled 5-liter fermenters. Graduate education focused on genetics and metabolic pathways, combined with a hands-on understanding of microbial physiology and fermentation modeling.*

This approach matches the applicant's qualifications to the job requirements. Whereas the former approach emphasizes learning in an academic setting, the latter conveys the impression of a smart person who's eager to attack the problems the company needs to have solved.

Other alterations of your CV for industry use

Another article about this topic in the Tooling Up column (“CVs That Open Industry Doors”) describes a number of other differences between the academic CV and the one you would use to find a job in a company.

One thing that can create confusion is that writers often use the terms “CV” and “resume” interchangeably, as I often do in the Tooling Up column on ScienceCareers.org. But a resume and an industry CV are used for different types of jobs. A CV should be used for technical positions that require more detail. For a new graduate, the industry CV could be three to five pages long, plus a list of publications. Some are a lot longer than that, but what is most important is that it be succinct.

Modifying your CV for industry use means cutting back on superfluous detail and adding the “sizzle” that gets you the interview. The sizzle is in your statement of qualifications, right at the top of the first page (prime “resume real estate”). Now cut back some of that superfluous detail, which documents the academic relics of days gone by.

For example, you don't need to have a list of every poster delivered or abstract written. Avoid that “personal interests” section that is so often dropped into a CV to make it seem resume-like. The occasional hiring manager will be impressed by your interest in bowling, but more will find it a distraction, and at least a few people will be turned off by it.

In your CV, the powerful writing ends with the “Qualifications” statement. From there on, it's editing that counts: tidying up, shortening, formatting, focusing—generally, making certain that it bears no resemblance to the CV your graduate adviser has up on his website.

The resume and cover letter: Choose your words carefully

The resume is always a short-form document, used in situations in which you are applying for something other than a research job. Perhaps you have an interest in management consulting or in a marketing or business-development job. In cases such as these, you'll want to stick to a one- or two-page resume. (Some fields, notably consulting, are famous for insisting on only one page.) Obviously, words matter when you are cut back to only a page or two. Consider using some of the “action words” that the University of the District of Columbia came up with for its law students. See this excellent list.

The other crucial document, partner to your CV or resume, is your cover letter. Your cover letter style can make a huge difference in your success at landing interviews. That's why you should *never* use a form letter. Hiring managers (and HR staff) read cover letters, as a rule, so this is your chance to focus on a major accomplishment and ensure that your CV gets more than the perfunctory 20 to 30 seconds.

When composing your cover letter, think about what the readers are looking for and point them toward it. Use a short paragraph to highlight an accomplishment that they will find more about inside your CV. Like the “Qualifications” statement on the CV, this is your “grabber.”

An example:

I was recently a part of the team that did the E. coli metabolic pathway work published in the Journal of Fermentation Science, which led to the production of a unique secondary metabolite with commercial potential. My contribution was to identify the correct feedstock for a continuous fermentation run, in fermenters specially equipped with custom controllers that used programming I co-wrote.

See how this cover letter grabber ties together with the qualifications statement on the CV? It's the old one-two punch.

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15 Minutes to a Better Interview

By David G. Jensen ~ November 28, 2008

A few years ago, I learned the hard way how important the basic rules of job interviewing are. I had been invited to a multibillion-dollar chemical company to sell my recruiting services to a panel of bigwigs and human resources staff. They all sat across from me at a conference table—except for one woman, who sat off to my left.

After what I thought was a great interview, the call came telling me the company wasn't going to use my services. It turns out that the decision-maker was the woman next to me—whom I rarely turned to during my pitch. I had blown it—especially embarrassing for a person who has written about the importance of eye contact in job interviews! Why didn't I remember to turn and “visit” her during my presentation? Most likely, it was because I didn't stop to review all the basics before I went into the meeting.

This, then, is a “read and print for later” column for the job applicant—one simple list of all those items you should remember to do before, during, and after the interview. It's not an exhaustive treatise on the subject, and it will take you only 15 minutes to read and digest. But don't let the simple, somewhat basic, nature of these items turn you off: Even an old pro like me needs to review the basics now and again.

Before the interview

1. Get an interview agenda ahead of time that shows the names and titles of people you will meet with during the day. This will usually come from the HR department.

2. Read as much as you can about the company, including the work of people whose names show up on the interview agenda. At a minimum, study the company's website and look for additional articles and information on sites such as Yahoo Finance.
3. Prepare several copies of your curriculum vitae to take with you in case the HR department has not provided them to your interviewers.
4. Make sure you know exactly where the company is located. If it's local or you're in town with a rental car, do a drive-by so you'll know the specifics about the drive time and parking.
5. Come up with a list of questions that you'd like to ask about the company and the job. Bring a notebook with you for the occasional note-taking and write your list of questions on the first page.
6. Know those common interview questions that you should consider preparing for in advance.

During the interview

1. Walk into the interview with a confident, upright posture. Shake hands firmly, giving your name first. Make sure you take your hand out of your pocket well before you'll have to use it; a sweaty hand makes a poor first impression.
2. Be alert but comfortable. Use your hands, eyes, and head to emphasize what you say. Lean forward slightly in your chair while listening; your body language should indicate a general attitude of "attentive interest."
3. Smile and laugh when appropriate. People who smile are seen as likely to be fun to work with and are assumed to have confidence in themselves.
4. At the same time, don't be a joker. That rarely works in your favor. One candidate reported to us that his favorite joke was so well received that the marketing vice president had him repeat it three times to others. He didn't get the offer—they all thought he was a fun guy but not serious enough about his work.
5. Don't make extensive notes during an interview unless the interviewer suggests you write something down. Constant note-taking can make you appear disengaged.
6. It's important for everyone you talk to during the interview to feel that you were listening well. Although people have different ways of listening and concentrating, good eye contact with everyone in the room will send the right signal.
7. Treat everyone in the company with the same high level of courtesy.

8. Find out early what the interviewers are interested in and then talk about it. If they ask questions about your interest in gene expression in yeast, don't continue talking about *E. coli*. Your job is to spark interest—and then to maintain it.
9. Although you may want to use some responses you've practiced in advance, don't forget to vary the tone of your voice and avoid speaking in monotone when you are rattling off an answer you've thought a lot about.
10. Remember that the interviewer may be just as uncomfortable as you are. Rather than concentrating on your own insecurities, try concentrating on the person in front of you. Make the interview go smoothly for her and you will find that you've conducted a great interview. Honest smiles and a friendly approach can make a great deal of difference.
11. Get the names, with proper spelling, of all the people you interview with over the course of the day. Better yet, get their business cards.
12. Although you always want to focus on your strengths, never inflate an area of weakness. You may be inclined to go on about a particular subject you don't know all that well, but if you get caught, it's a deal-breaker.
13. Avoid radiating a "What can you do for me?" attitude.
14. Avoid politics, religion, and controversy of any kind. If a hiring manager asks you about the new president, respond with a generally positive comment as opposed to telling her that you were the head of the political action committee for Obama on campus.
15. Remember that a well-placed pause after an important question is worth its weight. This "thinking pause" doubles the value of whatever your answer might be. Even though you may have the answer right on the tip of your tongue, it is better to pause and reflect briefly before responding.
16. Never say anything negative about a previous employer or a former colleague. Everyone knows this, and yet it's all too easy to fall back on negative comments when asked why you left a lab or an earlier job.
17. If you have some sort of skeleton in your closet, get the answers to probing questions sorted out in advance. Never expect that you'll be able to hide that terrible relationship you have with your adviser or the fact that it took you 9 to 10 years to complete your degree.
18. Assume that everyone you talk with on interview day will be involved in the decision to hire, no matter how they are introduced. Answers to the "candid" questions you're asked by prospective peers often make it back to the hiring manager. You are interviewing no matter where these conversations take place—in the hallway, the lunchroom, or while walking through the plant.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Career-Related Resources from *Science* and AAAS

- Science Careers Job Board scjobs.sciencemag.org
- Science Careers Forum scforum.aaas.org
- Other Career Related Booklets sciencecareers.org/booklets
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- GrantsNet sciencecareers.org/funding
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- Tooling Up: Job Talk Jitters bit.ly/dxKvJ

Miscellaneous

- Tooling Up: The Job Seeker's Lexicon bit.ly/3bTBt
- Tooling Up: Defying Gravity bit.ly/j5E8B
- Transferring Skills into Career Options bit.ly/OfLee
- Taken for Granted: Fitting the Job Market to a T bit.ly/3LiDbj

19. Don't be overly concerned with details when the HR department starts to rattle off company benefits. You can find out how many weeks of vacation you'll get when an offer is made. Benefits are not the focus of your day.

20. Raising salary questions in an interview will send the wrong signals. Let them bring up this subject first, which would generally come as they are considering you for an offer.

21. Lastly, don't leave the interview without asking specifically where the process stands. Know the timetable on which they are working and when you will hear their decision. Express your eager interest one last time!

After the interview

1. E-mail a thank-you note to each of the people you interviewed with that day. Make it brief, expressing your desire to work with them and answering any questions that they might have had during your interview that you didn't answer or that you agreed to answer more fully later. Consider an actual letter in the mail to the person who was your champion for the day.

2. Call your main contact at the company, either your prospective boss or an HR person, at the time frame they suggested for a follow-up. For example, if they said, "We'll get back to you in 2 weeks," then call in 15 days. During that call, stress your positive feelings about the job but don't apply too much pressure, because if they don't have a ready reply for you, they're probably still in the interview or decision process.

3. No matter what the result of the above (which will be either "We have a continued interest" or "Sorry, we're going in another direction"), set your sights on where you'll find the *next* interview. Never count on anything until it becomes a signed offer in your hands.

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Books

- *“So What Are You Going to Do with That?”: Finding Careers Outside Academia*, Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius
- *The Chicago Guide to Your Career in Science: A Toolkit for Students and Postdocs*, Victor A. Bloomfield and Esam E. El-Fakahany
- *What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*, Richard Nelson Bolles
- *Put Your Science to Work: The Take-Charge Career Guide for Scientists*, Peter Fiske
- *Finding Your North: Self-Help Strategies for Science-Related Careers*, Frederick L. Moore and Michael L. Penn

Information from Other Organizations

- American Chemical Society
www.acs.org/careers
- American Physiological Society
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