How to Find a Postdoc Position?

Facts, Tips & Personal Experience

PhD Student (2016-2020)

Ziv Ben-Zion
zivbz1@gmail.com

Postdoctoral Fellow (2021-2026)

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Human Brain Project (2018-current)

Student Ambassador SP8/WP1

Student Representative DEOC
Should I look for a Postdoc?

"Dad, I've finally finished my PhD!"

"About time, son!"

"Now I will search for a post-doc!"

"Why can't you do drugs just like the other kids?!"
What is a Postdoc?

- The next step on the academic career path after earning a doctoral degree (hence the name).

- A temporary position that allows a PhD to continue their training as a researcher and gain skills and experience that will prepare them for their academic career.
What is a Postdoc?

**Best research conditions:** budget, networking, facilities, collaborations, lab, projects, publication standards.

A long, demanding and difficult phase.

The Postdoc: A Special Kind of Hell

By Adam Ruben | Nov. 21, 2013, 11:30 AM
Postdoc Facts

• Number of US postdoctoral positions has **more than tripled** since 1979.

• The majority are in the **life sciences**

• Across fields, **median salaries** for postdocs are outstripped by those for non-postdoc positions.

Postdoc Key Tips

1. Get advice from your PhD supervisor
   • Professional connections / collaborations / recommendations

2. Start building your networks early (e.g., HBP)
   • HBP summit → student ambassador → DEOC member → mentoring program.

3. Look worldwide / outside your specialism / comfort-zone
   • Don’t be afraid to go after your biggest dreams!

4. Find funding!
   • research.jhu.edu/rdt/funding-opportunities/postdoctoral/
   • https://www.researchprofessional.com/
How to Choose a Lab?

The selection should be based on:

- The general scientific environment within the city/area
- The caliber of the university, the PI and the lab at large
- Where did people who had recently come out of the lab get academic positions?
- Whether you would like to go to a big and established lab, or to a smaller lab, likely run by a younger PI?

Potential pitfalls in larger labs:

- Need to manage your own project with almost no guidance from the PI
- Anonymity
- More competition within the group
- Excess money can lead to lack of innovation

Talk with former & current lab members

Big lab

- Closer interaction with the PI
- More internal collaboration
- More involvement of the PI in your project
- Higher motivation to publish high and fast (?)

Small lab

- Higher chances of getting fellowships
- Closer interaction with the PI
- More internal collaboration
- More involvement of the PI in your project
- Higher motivation to publish high and fast (?)
When to Apply?

Apply 8-12 months ahead

- Summer-time is busy for the PIs
- School year starts at September

Some things that will take time

- Finding 5-10 relevant labs
- Recommendation letters
- Response from PIs
- Schedule lab visits
- Visa and family-oriented things to organize
- Fellowships (need to propose project)
- Ph.D. thesis and articles
How to Contact a Lab?

“Here is my CV attached, I’m great for this job” - The cover letter may determine whether a busy PI will decide to read your CV.

Generic letters are easy to spot – Do some in-depth research about the group, always tailor your application!

Don’t talk only about your PhD! Show how your skills are useful and fit your postdoc research.
Thank You For Your Attention!

Please feel free to contact me!

zivbz1@gmail.com

HBP Tea & Slides VI - Career Development, November 5th, 2020