

Grad Student and Postdoc Career Guide: Finding Your Fit in Industry

Start with You

Understand Yourself:

Values, Interests, Skills, Personal Style, Educational Background, Work and Leisure Experience

Understand Your Situation:

Significant Others, Responsibilities, Needs, Financial Situation

Identify Your Skills:

- What jobs, fellowships, internships, volunteer positions or significant hobbies have you held in your life? List them all. Cross out any in industries or sectors you know are not connected to where you want your career to go.
- What responsibilities did you have in each remaining role? Did you have any particular accomplishments in those roles? List them.
- Which responsibilities did you enjoy? Cross out any you would never want to do again.
- What skills did you use or develop fulfilling those responsibilities?
- Prioritize your list of skills based on how much you'd like to use that skill in your career. Pay particular attention to your top 5-10.

Identify Your Interests:

- What activities do you gravitate towards? What specifically appeals to you about those activities? What roles do you tend to fill? Are there types of work or projects you enjoy taking the lead on?
- What issues or causes are important to you? If you're involved in volunteer work, what types of organizations do you volunteer with and why? What roles do you tend to take on and why do you take those specific roles on?
- Have you ever been so immersed in a project, task or activity that you lost track of time or didn't want to stop? What were you doing?
- If you could do anything – all obstacles removed – what would you be doing?
- When have you been happiest in life? What were you doing?
- What careers were you interested in as a child? Why? What appealed to you about those careers?
- What are your hobbies? How do you spend your free time?
- What classes have been your favorites in high school and at Yale? What appealed to you about those classes?
- If you could take classes on any topic, what would you take and why?
- Who do you admire most and why?

- When reading newspapers, magazines, websites or watching TV, what types of shows, topics or issues are you naturally drawn to? What appeals to you about those?
- If someone was awarding you a lifetime achievement award, what would you like him/her to say about you?

Consider Your Personality Preferences:

- How much interaction with others do you need in your work? Are you energized by being around a lot of people, or do you prefer working in small groups, or working alone?
- Do you prefer imagining possibilities and being inventive, or do you enjoy handling practical matters, details, and work that is measurable?
- Are you excited by the prospect of having a competitive component to your job or does that thought repel you?
- What type of feedback and accountability for performance do you like in your work?
- How comfortable are you with taking risks in relationships/ with finances/ physically?
- Do you find more comfort in routine, organization, planning or with flexibility, autonomy and keeping options open?

Understand Your Options

Initial Labor Market Research:

1. Begin from what you know
2. Research those and keep a growing list of interesting options
3. Start with online research but move quickly to informational interviewing so you aren't filling in your knowledge gaps with fear-based assumptions about the field or options

Potential Information to Uncover:

- Typical on-the-job duties
- Qualifications
- Growth/decline of job availability
- Salary
- Methods of entry

Continually Check in with Yourself:

How do your skills, values and interests correspond to the types of work you are considering? Are there responsibilities you have that disqualify certain options? Before you cross any options off your list seriously consider if barriers you believe are there are truly insurmountable or if there may be a creative way around it.

- How excited/interested are you about/in this opportunity?
- What are you doing/considering/writing off out of fear?
- How much would you be adapting to fit into this career field?

Post-Research: Evaluating Your Options

- What is your initial reaction to the career field after your research?
- What appealed to you about the field? What didn't appeal to you? List the pros and cons.
- Did any information surprise you? Did you learn something about the field that you didn't know before? Does this new knowledge impact your opinion of the career field?
- What skills, knowledge, or experience will you need to be competitive for entry in this field? Are you interested enough in the field to develop these skills or knowledge?
- With every new career there is a learning curve along with knowledge and skills that will need to be developed in order to excel. Are you willing to put in the necessary time and effort to be successful and advance in the career? Is your interest sustainable or fleeting?
- Consider what you learned about yourself through the self-assessment process including your interests, skills, personality, and values. Are there aspects of the career that fit better than others?
- Do you think you would be satisfied in this field or position? Why or why not?
- How much adapting will be necessary for you to be satisfied in this career area? No career is going to be a 100% perfect match; there will be aspects that aren't going to be exactly what you want, but is the percentage of less desirable components at an acceptable level or will it impact your long-term satisfaction?

Find Your Fit in Industry: Self Understanding Worksheet



Topic	Clarity	Priorities	Resources to Leverage	Need to Consider
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Interests		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Values		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Skills		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Personality		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Work/Leisure Experience		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Education and Certifications		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Significant Others		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Non-negotiable Responsibilities		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
Financial Needs		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		

Find Your Fit in Industry: Option Research



	Industry: Role	Industry: Role	Industry: Role	Industry: Role
Sector				

Duties				
Qualifications				
Salary				
Entry Points				
Matching Skills				
Skills Gaps				
Values Concerns				
Interests Engaged				
Personal Barriers				
Professional Barriers				
Related Roles				
Connections				
Pros				
Cons				
Helpful Resources				