

Top 5 Career Tips for Ph.D. & Postdoctoral Researchers

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Once you finish your PhD, things may get difficult. Many factors come into play after graduation. Mostly, early career researchers vie for funding, but research data show that early career researchers take the smallest size of the funding pie. Case in point, the [NIH budget](#) in 2016 was UD 3.2 billion, but early career researchers, aged 40 and below, received just 7% of the total funds. In addition, the publication of life sciences papers exhibits a downward slump that is attributable to the lack of funding allocated to early career researchers.

Challenges for PhDs and Postdocs

Undoubtedly, the job market for PhD graduates and postdoctoral researchers is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. Typically, [data indicate](#) that an average PhD takes 8 years to complete. By the time PhD students graduate, more than 12% of them have accumulated an average of \$70,000 in student debt. Moreover, those lucky enough to get a tenured job earn only about \$60,000 per year. On an average, 39% of PhDs get a salary of \$40,000 a year, which is less than the entry-level salary for B.A. graduates. These statistics are indeed depressing. However, acquiring PhDs is still popular even though the challenges are overwhelming.

How to Get Over the Job Crisis

The life of a postdoc researcher is filled with uncertainty. A study by [the Australian Society for Medical Research \(ASMR\) showed](#) that 1 in 4 PhD graduates faced uncertainty in terms of their job because of the lack of research funding. Furthermore, this lack of funding leads to a decline in the scientific workforce. Enduring these challenges, how can PhD graduates and postdoc researchers overcome the job crisis?

Here are some tips that can prove to be helpful in such situations:

- 1) You have to decide the role that you plan to pursue after your PhD. Perform a self-analysis exercise and take into account your skills, personality, values, interests, and motivation. Once you have decided on the role that you want to take up, go through employer presentations. This will provide you with additional viable options.
- 2) Decide whether you want to work in academia or not. While it may seem like an obvious choice, your work should match your motivations.
- 3) If you decide to move out of academia, your work options significantly increase. There are many roles that you can pursue.
- 4) You have to realize that your work does not have to be directly related to what you studied.
- 5) You should also explore job vacancy sites once you have decided on your chosen career.

Choosing Wisely: Academic vs. Non-Academic Careers

Getting successful career opportunities in academia comes with its own set of challenges. Thankfully, there are [ways to ease this problem](#). In order to give yourself the best chance of succeeding, you need to contact as many academics in your chosen field as possible. You might also be able to match your skills to the needs of institutions. Moreover, there are plenty of choices should you decide to pursue a non-academic role. These include administrative work, data analysis, preparation of reports, assessing and marketing work, presenting at seminars and work conferences, teaching in seminars or lectures, and writing research as well as publishing findings. In addition, you can also [find work outside academia](#) that is related to your PhD. For instance, a PhD in English Literature can land you a job as a high school teacher, while a PhD in Biology can qualify you for scientific writing.

There are [a number of options](#) available for academic work. Science careers include finding roles in project management, publishing, and communicating research. Aside from this, managing teams and corporate divisions are attractive alternatives to life in

the academe. Furthermore, legal, social, and technical careers are also viable options. Many PhD graduates work in the top tier of governments, such as NHS, social research companies, and development. A PhD graduate should have the skillset to work in these jobs.

Whether you have already graduated or not, thinking about your career options is critical to your success. There are plenty of choices in terms of your career track both in and outside academia. It's best to understand yourself first so that you can find the right match with your interests and skills.

How is life after postdoc like for you? These tips can help you navigate through postdoc life. Let us know your thoughts in the comments below!

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