

The Job Market: What I Wish I'd Known

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A few disclaimers

- Everyone's experience is different: year (and even field-by-year) fixed effects, and luck matter.
- Many things are beyond your control: focus on what you can actually influence.
- These are lessons from my own market experience: take what helps and leave the rest.
- You will receive a lot of advice: **remember no one knows better than you what is right for you.**
- **Believe in yourself:** you have already done a lot and should be proud!
- The general rhetoric around the job market can be discouraging, especially for women...
- But for me, it was actually one of the most enjoyable periods of my PhD!

It is about the process, not only the destination

- It is like any job search...
- But it is also more than that:
 - It is your entry into the profession.
 - It is a unique opportunity to discuss and showcase your work.
 - People within and outside your department want to help you succeed: this helps build your network.
 - You will meet many people: take this opportunity to make a strong first impression.
 - You will (probably) never get this much attention again: use it to make your work visible.
- Try to enjoy the process!
- Beyond research quality, being nice and professional matters (they are also hiring a colleague).

From January to the summer before the market

- The toughest phase (to me): a lot of stress and uncertainty... **Stay focused on your JMP!**
- It is a marathon, not a sprint: do not burn out too early.
- Do not hesitate to seek support: peers, sport, mentors, advisors, or even professional help.
- Present within your institution to collect final technical feedback.
- Apply and present at summer conferences:
 - Incentive to write a first draft early, even if it is imperfect (it helps later!).
 - Mostly to build confidence, network, and anticipate questions: do your own marketing!
 - This depends, of course, on the stage of your job market paper.
 - In my opinion, avoid conferences with senior discussants: protect your confidence!
- Have first drafts of other papers ready: only clickables count on the market.
- In general, only the JMP matters, conditional on having other clickables.

Summer and September

- Define your **choice triangle**: the three criteria that matter most to you.
 - Location, salary, research support, department quality, tenure requirements, field coverage...
 - This will guide your decisions later when you are stressed, tired, or under pressure.
- Prospect your letter writers and update them regularly on your progress during the summer.
- The mock job market talk is not like any talk: it must be very well prepared!
 - Make sure your letter writers attend this talk.
 - This is NOT a regular talk: it shapes how strongly people will support you.
 - No time for extra technical details: feedback will focus mostly on presentation.
 - One bullet point = one line.
- Discuss your prospects with your advisor and how strongly they can advocate for you.
- Build a list of places you would like to target, across different levels of selectivity.

- Polish your **JMP abstract, introduction, and figures**: these are the most read parts.
- Make sure you have a working website with links to your JMP and other papers.
- **Use your network**: let people know you are on the market (speakers, coauthors, discussants).
- Prepare your application package: JMP, papers, research and teaching statements, CV...
- Prepare tailored versions of your cover letter by institution type.
 - Costly to personalize too much but important information to communicate: be strategic, never lie.
- Register on platforms (JOE, EJM, Interfolio) and **request recommendation letters early**.
- Set up a **spreadsheet** to track applications, deadlines, and materials.
 - Track which applications require letters outside platforms and send your referees a separate list.
- Paying Interfolio subscription can make the process much smoother.

November: Applications...

- The hardest part is behind you!
- Applying is repetitive, but is also meditative and sometimes fun.
- In this period, try to keep a routine (sport) and especially don't self-isolate!
- Communicate with your placement officer, advisor and letter writers: their involvement is key!
- Where to apply?
 - Do not self-censor: apply everywhere, including top places.
 - Do not factor in preferences yet: decide later when you have offers.
 - Do not apply in a place you are **fully sure** you will never go.
 - Make sure to communicate your preferences/restrictions to your letter writers.
 - Signals: 2 on JOE, 10 on EJM. Be strategic, it can make a big difference!
- From this point on, do not reopen any code: avoid losing confidence in your paper.

November: Interview Preparation

- Prepare your **spiel**: a clear and concise presentation of your JMP.
 - Practice multiple formats: 5 min, 10–15 min, 30 min → onion layers.
 - Try, test, and iterate as much as possible.
 - Set up a small group of PhDs on the market and practice regularly.
 - Clarity and confidence matter as much as the quality of your paper.
 - Write it down, learn it by heart, but avoid sounding robotic.
 - Record one mock interview and rewatch it.
- Always the same questions: "Tell us about..."
 - Your job market paper, other papers, research agenda, teaching experience.
 - Why you would like to join the department.
- Last question: "Do you have any questions for us?"
 - An opportunity to emphasize why it would be a good fit for you.
 - Debatable: you can also say "Everything is clear, I look forward to hearing from you."
 - A safe option is to ask which fields the department aims to grow in.

December: Interviews

- Setup:

- Now mostly on Zoom: make sure you have a good setup (neutral background, stable connection).
- Dress formally (including pants!).
- Some places may ask to see your ID at the beginning of the interview.
- Be prepared for different formats: from 2 to 30 people.

- Scheduling:

- Keep an up-to-date, precise calendar of your interviews.
- You will improve over time: try not to schedule your top choices first.
- Avoid scheduling too many interviews in one day or back-to-back.

- Performance:

- Smile and sound enthusiastic about your research and the department.
- Prepare strategically: look up interviewers and connect your work to theirs.
- **Energy matters: stay engaged, positive, and enthusiastic despite Zoom fatigue (yours and theirs)!**
- Follow-up emails are debatable: useful if you want to clarify an answer.

Christmas Break: Build your flyout material...

- Breathe, exercise, and disconnect with family: you have never been closer!
- Do not do anything drastic (especially if it could affect your confidence).
- Practice your talk, especially practice the intro: repetition builds confidence.
- **Prepare different lengths: 60, 75, 90 minutes.**
- Practice your spiel on each of your other papers.
- Check the validity of your passport.
- Make sure you have some savings: reimbursements (especially flights) come later.
- Do the last-minute shopping/prep you might need:
 - professional shoes, suits, steamer, suitcase, USB key, clicker, water bottle, watch,
 - sleep mask, cereal bars, vitamins, flu and COVID vaccines.

Christmas Break: Scheduling Flyouts

- Try to keep at least one day between flyouts: you will need it to travel and recover.
- Back-to-back flyouts are very tiring, but might be worth it if they are in the same location.
- Do not schedule your top choice first, but avoid leaving it too late!
- If you interviewed at places in the same city (top choices only), it may be worth reaching out.
- The market comes in waves: expect slow periods and hectic bursts, and embrace the rhythm.

January: Flyouts, the day before

- Take pictures of all receipts for reimbursement and keep the originals in a designated one place.
- Update your slides to match the presentation length and the institution.
- Put your slides on a USB key (or send them in advance).
- Review the list of people you will meet: note names and key topics to discuss.
- Check your arrival time: it may differ between a welcome and a first meeting.
- Consider booking a cab/Uber in advance.
- Steam your shirt and pack everything (like cereal bars, especially if lunch is after the seminar).
- Rest, sleep well, and take some time alone: the process is socially intense.

January: Flyouts, the D-day...

- The morning:
 - Breakfast is often included in the hotel reservation.
 - Build a ritual: put on a “confidence mask”.
- Once you arrive:
 - You will have a base room but move between offices to meet people.
 - Conversations are often similar: *What would you like to know about our department?*
 - With senior faculty: ask about research funds, teaching load, tenure requirements.
 - With junior faculty: ask about atmosphere, department, city.
 - With women: maternity leave, work-life balance, women environment.
 - Some will want to discuss your work, others how likely you are to accept an offer.
 - Do not drink too much water.
 - Do not be afraid to ask to go to the restroom.
 - Do not feel the need to fill every silence.

January: Flyouts, the D-day...

- The seminar:
 - Make sure to always open your slides in Adobe (not on Google!).
 - Keep track of time and finish on time.
 - Not every question is a good question: this is your presentation and you must stay in control.
 - If the discussion drifts, suggest continuing later and move on → signal it physically.
 - In this case, do not be overly soft in the name of politeness.
 - No one expects your paper to be perfect or finished.
 - If needed, acknowledge limitations during the seminar.
 - Let people finish their questions before answering.
- The end of the day:
 - Dinners can be long and you may not have time to rest beforehand.
 - Write down your impressions at the end of the day.

February: Offers

- Offers often arrive at different times...
 - You may need to decide before hearing back from others.
 - This can mean cancelling flyouts (this is why timing matters!).
 - Again, think about your options once you have offers, not before.
- Once you get an offer:
 - Congratulations!
 - Reach out to your advisor, placement officer, and letter writers: ask for their advice.
 - Reach out to places you prefer over the one where you have an offer.
 - If deadlines are very short, communicate them and try to negotiate extensions.
 - You are tired, pressured, and stressed: go back to your **choice triangle**.
 - There is often some room to negotiate: salary, teaching, research funds.
- Once you say yes to a place:
 - **Immediately** inform all departments where you had flyouts and decline all other offers.
 - You are finally done: a thousand congratulations!

Final words

- Once again, the market comes in waves: do not get discouraged.
- In the end, you are highly qualified women searching for a job: it will be fine!
- Believe in yourself and do not hesitate to ask for all the help you can get.
- After the market: REST without guilt and be proud!

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Thank you!

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