

A postdoc may be the **best** or the **worst** job decision  
in your career!



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# **A successful career in science**

Thanks for all the comments, emails and questions!

A postdoc may be  
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job decision in your career!

# A **great** career in science

You may have seen colleagues who know exactly what they want...  
... and follow up on it – for example by doing the best postdoc(s) possible.  
... and pursue the scientific career they want - like a missile.

You can do this too!  
You can pursue a great career in science!



**To postdoc or not to postdoc?**

# To postdoc or not to postdoc



My postdoc period was pretty long ...

1+ year as a 'lab manager' at Humboldt University Berlin, Germany

1.5-year as a researcher at the University of London, UK \*before\* my MD degree + graduation

1.5 years internship as a doctor at University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany

6+ years as an anatomist in Berlin, Germany to get my habilitation degree

Thus, 10+ years in a postdoc-like state....

Was it worth it?

Should I have done it faster?

**To postdoc or not to postdoc**



You can do it faster!



For how long should I  
be a postdoc?



# What is the shortest period possible?

It depends on your career goals (industry, academia, public sector...)

You may either skip the postdoc and immediately start an industry job...

or you may accept **a postdoc position for 1 year.**

- It may not really serve you.
- It is not easy to produce good results (publications, grant proposals, patents...) within such a short period.
- If going abroad, you need considerable time to adapt to the new environment.

Shorter periods than one year will not be considered as a real postdoc experience...

If you are not “hired away”.

If your intention is to limit your postdoc period as much as possible it might be better *\*not\** to do a postdoc and apply directly for industry or public sector positions.

# What is a reasonable time for a postdoc?

As a rule of thumb:

**A good postdoc period takes 2 to 4 years.**

Enough time to

- develop at least one major project
- publish at least one major paper at the end
- make broader experiences with supervising PhD students, bachelor and master students and technicians.
- use this time to develop and demonstrate scientific independence and leadership skills
- become a more attractive candidate for professor positions

In my humble opinion doing your postdoc abroad for 2 years is the minimum to

**broaden your horizon, learn the language sufficiently and dive deep into the culture of another country.**

# What is the longest acceptable period for a postdoc?

It is not advised to stay a postdoc for more than 5-6 years after the doctorate.

Being a long-term postdoc has a price:

## **professional costs:**

- temporary contracts
- no long-term career perspective
- no career progression

## **financial costs:**

- poor pension plan
- no group insurance plan

## **personal costs**

- effect on emotional well-being/frustration
- family planning, settling down

**Thus, there are multiple arguments not to become a long-term postdoc.**

# Should I do a postdoc anyway?

It depends on your career goals!

Many young scientists start a postdoc because they have no clue what they should do with their PhD.

Some may think that a postdoc is a nice way of extending the student lifestyle for a few years.

Others may consider it as an important additional training to qualify for industry positions.

Whether a postdoc adds sufficient additional value for an industry position (more technical skills, more people skills) or not seems to be heavily debated.

In contrast, if you consider a career as a professor a postdoc period is a necessary stepping-stone.

In most faculties to become a professor you are obliged to have a few years of postdoc experience – ideally abroad.

When you know what you want, you can quickly make the right decision!

Doing a postdoc may be your **worst** career decision!

Not doing a postdoc may be a **smart** career move!

You may get more job satisfaction in a job outside of academia.

You may start your non-academic career much earlier.

You may earn \*much more\* in a non-academic job.



# You need to know **\*precisely\*** which career you want!

When you know what you want, you can quickly make the right decision!

When you know what you want, you can focus on the right skills to qualify yourself!

When you know what you want, you can cancel all the unnecessary activities that do not bring progress! → there is no overwhelm anymore!

When you know what you want, you can ask the right persons for advice and help!

# The 3 Myths

I don't want to close any doors.

→ Not choosing/deciding blocks your ambition and your progress!

I don't know what I want.

→ Clarity comes from engagement, not from thinking!

I will figure it out with a little more time.

→ Waiting does not lead to clarity, engagement does!

Challenge - to get more clarity:

## **A quick glance at your future self**

1. Choose two careers you may consider.
2. Imagine that you have chosen job 1 for five years and look back. Do you like it?
3. Imagine that you have chosen job 2 for five years and look back. Do you like it?
4. Write down which aspects (= side-effects) you like or dislike.
5. Decide which job is better.



# Challenge – part 2!!

You now have ideas about the two possible careers!

Great.

Now test you assumptions!

Ask a person who has job 1 or job 2 whether your ideas about this job are correct and how they handle it.

Ask this ONE person to tell you about their career for 10 minutes.

Post below a comment that you did it - and how easy or difficult it was.

**If you like this video - please share it!**

Please share it with a friend or colleague who may like or need it.

I just want to get the message out.

In the comment section please type in what you thought about the video.

Tell me any question you have.

**Thank you for being here, I am looking forward to see you in the next video:**

The big question: Leaving academia or not?