

Leaving academia or not?



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Thanks for all the comments, emails and questions!

The big question:
Leaving academia or not?

A **great** career in science

You may have seen colleagues who know exactly what they want...

They acquire new skills, publish, get grants, they network...

They pursue the scientific career they want.

You can do this too!

You can pursue a great career in science!



Staying in academia?

Leaving academia?

Top 10 frequently asked questions
about staying in or leaving academia

1

What are my chances
to stay in academia
(= become a professor)?

Success rate to become a professor: 3-5 % of all PhD holders



Academic
professorship
3-5%

Permanent staff
3-5%

Academic

9%

of PhD
graduates

2

Am I good enough for an academic career?

Am I good enough to become a professor?

Publication list

Grants

International mobility

Scientific independence

International reputation

Specialized teaching experiences

Technical skills

...

See my blog post: <https://smartsciencecareer.com/how-to-become-a-professor/>

3 Should I do a postdoc or leave academia?

A postdoc may be a **great qualification** for an academic or industrial career –
or a waste of 2-6 years of your life.

A postdoc may be your **worst** career decision!

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.



Staying in academia?

You may enjoy being a professor and doing great research for the rest of your life ...

... or you may not want the academic pressure (papers, grants) for the rest of your work life.

If you are **not good enough** for a prof position,
you have to find a non-academic job much later.

If you are excellent but **not lucky enough**,
you also have to find a non-academic job much later.



Should I do a postdoc or leave academia?

A postdoc may be a great qualification for an academic or industrial career – or a waste of 2-6 years of your life **depending on your career goals!**

4

Should I stay and become a senior scientist
(= become long-term postdoc)?

Should I become a long-term 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.

5

If not academia, how and when should I switch to another job?

There is no perfect answer, it depends on

- Your life situation
- Your interests
- Your ambition
- Your talents, skills, and qualifications

Rules of thumb:

When to get the right skills & qualifications: The sooner, the better!

When to switch to the next job: The sooner, the better!

6 Should I leave academia while I am still valuable?

This depends on the career you want to pursue.

For example:

Certain companies prefer master students because they are easier to form and to integrate into the company and they may be less expensive.

Other companies may prefer experienced postdocs who are experts in specific techniques/methods and/or have learned more leadership skills.

Caveat: Older postdocs may find it difficult to switch to the industry sector.

Therefore, you need to know your ideal career to learn when you are 'valuable'!

7 Can I come back to academia if I do not succeed in the non-academic job market?

Becoming a professor:

If you have not published well → no or very small chances

If you have published well, it is an interesting add-on → increased chances

Becoming non-research academic staff:

company-experience can be a big plus (e.g. tech transfer office)

8 Should I work for a company? Do I have enough competences and skills that are valuable in a company?

There is no perfect answer, it depends on

- Your life situation
- Your interests
- Your ambition
- Your talents, skills, and qualifications

Do not figure it out in your head!

You must get information from trustworthy advisors!

9 What if I change my job after a year? Will I be considered a "job hopper"?

If you have a convincing explanation, most employers will accept it.

If you change several times (2-4 times) in a short period of time, this will become a red flag for recruiters!

However, when you increase your qualification each time, it may be seen as a characteristic of a high performer.

10 What if I make the wrong decision?

If you stay in academia for too long:

You may be stuck in academia with no clear options for career development.

You may become unattractive (“too old”) for the non-academic job market.

If you leave academia

You may lose the chance to pursue an academic career.

You may be stuck with a terrible non-academic job.

How to find clarity and make the
right career decisions?

How to find your dream job in science?

How to find your dream job in science?

1. You have to check systematically what you really want.
2. You need support and accountability to do the necessary work.
3. You need a good method to clarify what the relevant careers are.
4. You need trustworthy advice to be sure that you have enough information to make a decision.
5. You need to put your dream to the test – is it REALLY what I want?

How to find your dream job in science?

1. You have to do more than listening to a 10 minute video.
2. You have to get in and engage.
3. You need a new strategy and mentorship.

That's what I want to give you.

How to find your dream job in science?

In the next video that I am going to send to your inbox there will be a link in there to an invitation for you to join me and let me mentor you a little bit

to get clarity and decide what your dream job in science is.

Sometimes you just need a new strategy and a mentor – I love to be that for you.

You can do this and I and the other participants will support you.

How to find your dream job in science?

Please watch your inbox tomorrow. I will send you a new email and a new video with the invitation in my upgraded program “Find your dream job in science”.

It is a 3-weeks program that helps you to get clarity and find your dream job.

You will

- Learn an experimental way to get sufficient information to make the right decision.
- Get support and accountability to engage and get the answers you need.
- Get mentorship to make sure that you ask the right questions.
- Get mentorship to make sure that you make the right career decisions.

Please make sure that watch your inbox tomorrow because I am going to invite you in that program.