Advice
Previous Job Market Candidates

1 Preparation

1.1 Early preparation

- You should be certain to present at a school other than Berkeley before your fly-outs. The attitude at Berkeley seminars is very chill and friendly compared to many other places, so you need to know how to present in front of a bunch of crusty old jerks who don’t know squat about your topic or methods but insist that they do. (You might not want to present your JMP elsewhere before it’s ready, but present something.)

- Practice presenting earlier.

- Present a lot at safe spaces (eg: Berkeley).

- Try to present to new people who have never heard your stuff (not just to the X lunch crowd again and again).

- You will need to know how to bounce back from bad talks.

- You need three letters so you need to talk to people early.

- Ask your advisor honestly what they think of you/your research and where they think you will place.

- Also talk to people who are not on your committee to anticipate how others will react on the market.

- Apart from the obvious points—diligent work on a job-market paper, etc.—the single best advice for students in 4th-year and in their last semester of 3rd-year is to meet with invited seminar speakers! No, not for lunch (although that is fine too). Push your way onto their agendas for the day and use your 30 minutes to talk about your research. In retrospect, this was the best interview practice and networking opportunity available. Please use it! If you learn someone’s schedule is “full” ask your advisor to give you their time slot.
In an interview it makes a huge difference when they open the door and they say “[Your Name]! Its great to see you again. How are you doing? ...” This personal contact is important. You already have a friend on the interview committee (and maybe a coauthor/colleague in the future). You also have natural questions to ask about their work to break the ice.¹

- All of the following things done during the summer before the job market were useful at some point in the job application process.

1. Made a CV. The department format for the CV is not pretty but it is functional. I made a second CV that was longer and type-set more elegantly. The marginal benefit of doing this was probability negligible and catered only to my own tastes.
2. Made templates for cover letters and drafted generic cover letters. (Apparently few people read these, but I always felt better including one anyway.) Private sector companies will read a cover letter.
3. Collected teaching evaluations and compiled data from them. I made a summary page of the data and included some excerpts of student comments. I organized these by courses and included information such as the class size and course instructor and the dates of my GSI service.
4. Wrote a two page research statement outlining my ongoing research projects and the general work I see myself doing in the next few years.
5. Wrote a statement of teaching philosophy. There are lots online if you are unsure what to write.
6. Updated my webpage. You need a webpage. Set one up during the summer. I had a website from the Open Computing Facility (OCF) at Berkeley. You can also use the econgrads website or Google Sites. If you wish, set up visitor tracking on your website (I used Statcounter).²

On my website, I had a photo, a description of my research papers, and a link to an audio file with the pronunciation of my name. I included relevant contact information (phone number, e-mail). I did not post teaching evaluations, teaching statements, or research statements.

- I wish I had prepared my statement of teaching philosophy ahead of time, and I wish I had prepared my research agenda ahead of time. These two are not required by the department as part of the job market packet, but many institutions ask for at least one of them and by time you’re applying it sucks to have to stop the process to write them up.

¹These job-market related aspects of meeting with outside speakers are a happy consequence of talking about research thoughtfully with others. Meeting speakers to “game” the job-market is counter-productive.

²Yes, it is exciting when someone from Princeton or Harvard visits your website; however, it is likely a paranoid job-market candidate or graduate student scoping out the competition rather than a faculty member.
• Everybody should invest the time into writing a research statement and a teaching statement; both for sending out with the package, but in particular to have good answers to questions regarding your research agenda / teaching preferences.

• You’ll be better off with a focus, and if it’s easier to tie the chapters of your dissertation with something other than “applied econometrics” or “applied micro”. Far fewer places want a generalist than whatever narrow field you could pick.

• Scrub the web thoroughly if you have a blog or tweet or keep your facebook profile open (which I wouldn’t recommend).

• Delete records of yourself online early.

• There’s a small chance that some places (state schools, governments) might have strict application procedures that might require that you technically have your master’s when applying. Unless you’ve filled out some form with the department to explicitly get it, you don’t have it yet.

• Read the John Cawley 2003 Article A guide for economists on the US junior academic job market.

• Have a rough draft (have all the sections but you can have entire arguments missing) by July with the purpose of having something to show your advisors and get their opinions.

• Don’t write your paper before your practice talk because you will just have to re-write it.

• Make your slides before you write your paper.

• Don’t worry about the wording until the last draft. I got complimented on my first draft for being really well-written but the second draft was almost a complete rewrite.

• Use Lyx, it’s easy, it looks professional, it has a large user base and the software is being maintained. Don’t spend any more time on formatting than needed to make the paper look professional.

• Spend a larger proportion of your time on the talk rather than the paper relative to your natural inclination.

• People will be interested in you based on the topic of your paper, not just what you say your field is.

• A lot of people don’t read stuff - both advisors and hiring committees.

• Put time into thinking about how to sell your main idea in 5 minutes.

• Meet with speakers and practice pitching research.

• Think about how your research relates to other fields and economics more generally.
• Put off the tenure clock by waiting a year! This will give you the time to produce a polished JMP and start working on more projects. Besides, graduate school is fun!

1.2 Applications

• Apply everywhere/to lots of places (not just US, not just positions for which you appear to be eligible), 200 is a good number to aim for.

• Look at the September JOE too, not just Oct/Nov. A handful of places will have firm deadlines as early as Oct 31, so be forewarned.

• There’s a small chance that inomics.com, euroeconomistjobs.com, and the higher education chronicle have openings for listings that aren’t in JOE. Not for great schools, but maybe in Europe or if you need a certain location.

• Be prepared for taking a long time to apply to the 160 places you’re supposed to apply to. I found that doing 10 in a day really exhausted me.

• Look at JOE to get information about where to apply. I did not use the automatic filters as I noticed the actual text in the ad may not always correspond to the JEL code listings. For example, the JEL code says macroeconomics but the text of the advertisement says that “outstanding candidates in all fields will be considered.”

• The average application on econjobmarket.org took about 40 seconds to complete, conditional on having all of the items ready to upload. I found it useful to bundle teaching evaluations, statements of teaching philosophy, research statements, etc., into one pdf file and upload that as the “supplemental material.” Sometimes, you are asked to upload these materials separately. It may be useful to have several “bundles” of documents ready depending on what the specific school wants.

• The average online application via a university’s HR system took 5–10 minutes to complete. There are a lot of these and they all use the same annoying interface. Be careful about applications that are online. In general there is an $\varepsilon$ of leniency for late applications (as long as it is before Thanksgiving), but online applications may be taken offline exactly at the deadline. (UK schools appeared to do this more than others and they also appeared to be rigid about deadlines and job application formalities.)


1.3 After applications are sent

• Come up with a constructive way of occupying yourself between Thanksgiving and ASSA.
When you finish your applications, suddenly you switch from production mode to mental preparation mode. You have to research the schools and brainstorm answers. But there’s not much to show for this kind of work. And so suddenly you have a lot more time on your hands. My advice would be to keep your focus off the job market as much as possible. Set aside a certain number of hours during the day to research schools and brainstorm for interviews. But when you are not doing that, come up with some other way of focusing your energy. Otherwise your energy will be drained by the job market, and probably without you even realizing how much it is consuming you. This is harder said than done, I’m pretty sure. It will be particularly hard the two weeks when most of the interview requests come. That period was a mix of sudden excitement and wearisome anticipation for me. And I’m not the only one who experienced the wearisome anticipation part. In some ways, it is the time when you have to come to terms with the aspects of the market over which you are powerless. Hence the next piece of advice

2 Scheduling interviews

• Interview requests come in waves. Please do not worry. I received interview requests from very good departments on December 14th and afterwards. My last interview was scheduled on December 23rd.

• Some departments call while others use e-mail. On several occasions I asked to call the person back at a better time to schedule the meeting. Typically, this was because I was walking somewhere outside and away from my agenda. Sometimes calls are made by faculty and not by an administrator.

• If given the chance, I always tried to schedule interviews on the day before the meetings and on the day after.

• If a school asks for the times at which you are “free” be judicious in revealing all of your free time from the start. If the two or three slots you propose are full, you will be given a chance to suggest other times.

• Try to learn the hotel before scheduling your interviews and factor in transit time between interviews. I scheduled “back-to-back” interviews on a few occasions. If they are in the same hotel, this is not a problem. I also did not have any problem scheduling back-to-back meetings in hotels that were (literally) across the street from each other; however, I felt tense looking at my watch making sure that I would not be late. For hotels that are further apart and may involve a taxi ride, 30 minutes is enough time.

At a few interviews I said at the start that my schedule is tight and that I will have to leave exactly when the interview ends. Ex post, this was not a problem and did not hurt my chances at a fly-out.

• Factor in time to eat lunch and dinner.
• Interview performance is inverse-U shaped over time, with learning at the beginning and exhaustion at the end.

• There probably is such a thing as too many interviews. Many interviews does leave the door open for later/second-round flyouts, but will probably hurt your initial flyout/interview ratio (though it may create a "buzz").

3 Interviews

• Bring purse to carry flats.

• Bring comfortable shoes for between interviews.

• They may ask you where you plan to publish.

• Most importantly perhaps, you have to have a really good idea of what your next research paper (or focus) is going to be after you’re completely done with your job market paper.

• You will be asked if you have any questions for them.

• Be careful about what you eat - now is not the time to try the “interesting-looking” restaurant in downtown neighborhood. Go for PB&J instead.

• Know who in the interviews you have to sell to.

• Sell your research agenda.

• If you do behavioral and X, say you do X.

• Staying in a far away hotel only works if you have a partner to chauffeur you back and forth. Don’t be cheap - just get a decent hotel ...

• Regarding accommodations, I would avoid the main conference hotel. Quite literally, there are lots of people in suits running around looking for jobs. I stayed at a hotel where there were few interviews. If the hotel charges for the internet, swallow the cost and buy yourself internet access for the main part of your stay. Interview room numbers are posted online.

• Have a cell phone—its main use was coordinating with friends to meet for dinner or drinks in the evening. One school sent me a text message with the interview room because the interview was scheduled at a very early time. Some schools will e-mail you the interview room rather than posting it with the disclosure code.

• Elevators get busier the day of the interviews and especially on the hour and in the main hotel (so your practice run may not take as much time as the real thing).
• Elevators: Some hotels demand guests swipe a card to access the elevator. Figure out if you need an access card before your interview time. Most hotels recognize that there will be a lot of people asking to gain access to the upper floors so they will place the elevators on free-flow. Free-flow may be turned off on the day before or after the conference when there are few interviews. This happened to me on the last day of the meetings.

• Do not practice your spiel. It’s pointless. You need to learn how to think on your feet. Teaching your own class is the best way to learn that. Anyway, the interviewers are going to try to get you off your speech as quick as possible because they are soooo bored of hearing them after the 10th one.

• The committees talk largely about your research, less than I expected about other stuff.

• If you can lie convincingly, it’s probably better to do so. That is, don’t be honest with consulting firms and say "I’d rather get an academic job but I’d take you if I had to." And when given the opportunity to ask a question about the school, which at some places will happen with every single person you talk to, don’t ask questions that would indicate you’re even remotely concerned about living there/working there/teaching a bunch of conservative students, or whatever. YOU LOVE IT THERE AND WANT TO WORK THERE. You can worry about what a place is actually like when/if you get an offer.

• The need to read the CV of the people that interview you so that you can ask them about their research is probably overstated. Glance at their CV so you know their field or a cool paper, but spend far more time planning answers to questions about what you want to teach, what you’re going to research next, how you would design a syllabus for a field course in your major field, etc.

• Have fun. You’re just talking to people. And it’s to people who want to listen to you.

• Try to think what questions you would ask yourself. What weak points might you want to address directly and what strong points might you want to make sure you bring out? This will also help you understand what they really want if they beat around the bush.

• Take notes during the interview. Stay in touch afterward.

• They may not ask you to launch into your job market paper and may not ever go there. Be prepared to be asked about your life path.

• They want somebody interesting. Think about what sets you apart.

• Try to leave an empty slot between each interview so you have time to get back and forth.

• Every department asks the same questions they start off with, tell me about your research. And you’re expected to launch into a monologue that will get interrupted. So have a spiel memorized and memorize it so well that it sounds natural.
• With that in mind, make sure that you write your spiel for someone who has never heard about your research. My mistake was that my first drafts of my spiel were written with an audience in my mind consisting of my advisors or other faculty here at Berkeley. This is because these are the people I’ve talked to most about my research and because I couldn’t imagine a total stranger being interested in my research. In fact, you will realize that people will be interested, and maybe people whose research you admire will be interested in your research. The point is, when you prepare your spiel, imagine that you’re talking to a group of people who are going to be very attentive, or at least try to appear to be.

• That said, you do want to be prepared for the questions and if you get one you didn’t prepare for, take some time to reflect on it, maybe rephrase it in your own words to make sure you understand where they’re coming from and acknowledge it’s a good question. From my experience, most of the toughest or most seemingly hostile questions came from people who actually liked my research the most. So do try to win these people over; it’s not hard, just letting them know you understand and appreciate their question goes a long way.

• Study the work of your interviewers. You’ll probably not talk about their work, but it will help you understand why they are asking the questions they are asking and help you answer them better.

• Come up with questions to ask them which show that your values align with what the school is looking for.

This is the most important piece of advice I have to offer. My sense was that the greatest part of their evaluation of me came from what types of questions I asked. Apart from how clever you are and how you respond to questions, they want to know that you will channel your energy and intelligence in the way that their department needs. What’s important for this is for them to know that your values and desires will motivate you (especially since academia is self-motivated).

A lot of resources give you the advice to think through answers to typical questions. I think that is really important and highly recommend finding a good list and thinking through each question carefully. But also think it is important to come up with questions ahead of time that demonstrate that you would be excited to work for a place like them.

Research the school ahead of time and brainstorm some questions based on the JOE advertisement and CVs of profs there. But also read the situation during the interview. Sometimes the values and priorities of a particular school surprise you.
Does a liberal arts college brag about their research funds? Ask how the faculty generally find co-authors. Ask about funding to attend conferences. Does a business school brag about their quality of students and the joy they get from teaching them? Ask about opportunities to get your students involved in collecting data or doing summer research. Do they start telling you about an interdepartmental program with which they have responsibilities? Ask about co-authoring with other departments and opportunities to teach non-econ majors. (If you are interested in liberal arts, you should come up with an exciting interdepartmental course that you would like to teach. Ask them if you would have an opportunity to teach such a course. They react well to this and it came up really often during my interviews).

I’m not saying you should lie or mislead them about your values. But the ASSA is an opportunity to try on different hats and see what feels right. Sometimes, when you are playing the role and pretending to be excited about their type of school, you find that the conversation excites you more than you would have expected. You will probably need to take some time after the conference to sort through your values again.

• Be careful about asking questions about work-life balance. Don’t ask everyone, and don’t let it be the first thing you ask.

If work-life balance or similar issues are important for you, its worth thinking about how you will approach this during the interviews. This should not come up at all during the ASSA interviews. ASSA isn’t a good place for you to assess them. It’s a screening mechanism for them to assess you. I’m sure many of the interviewers would disagree on this point, so it’s just my opinion.

During fly outs, you do need to make sure that you get the information that would be relevant for you to make a decision. So you’ll need to ask about work-life balance. But don’t ask everyone. Don’t ask the deans. And don’t emphasize it. Let those questions be an after thought. And you want to ask at least two pros, because people aren’t always very good at assessing things like this.

• Read good fun comfort books to keep your mind occupied pleasantly during travel, between ASSA interviews, etc. (Maximize your mood)

I agree with Shachar that your success will depend largely on how much fun you are having. And it is really fun to talk with these people about your research and about their jobs. I was very much surprised by how much fun the actual interviews turned out to be. What’s not fun is the time in between. Waiting in hotels, travelling, etc. There is so much weighing on your mind at this point, that it is easy for the worries to get bigger than they need to be in your mind. And that is going to have an impact on your interview performance. If you’ve done your foot work in preparing beforehand, you don’t need to do much analyzing between interviews. So just focus on getting your
mind in a fun mood. Harry Potter, Enders Game and Pride and Prejudice can help a lot.

• These are the things I had with me at the AEA meetings:
  
  – Shoe horn and something that cleans shoes. There exist disposable shoe-cleaning wipes which were convenient and mess-free to carry around. Having nice, clean shoes may boost your self-confidence. (The salt on the streets will make a mess of your footwear.)
  
  – Chap-stick. My lips were really dry.
  
  – Band-aids.
  
  – Handkerchief.
  
  – Copy of my paper and CV. (These were not useful. I did not take them out at all.)
  
  – List of my interview locations and relevant contact details in hardcopy.
  
  – I used a soft-sided briefcase to carry the few papers I had with me around. I would not feel comfortable carrying around a backpack but some people found that to be okay. I think backpacks and suits really do not mix well.
  
  – I did not feel the need to carry my laptop around to interviews. (No regrets.)
  
  – Many job candidates wear the conference badge/name tag. I did not. (No regrets.)

• Try not to wait by the hotel room door prior to the interview. Wait by the elevators or elsewhere. Time from the lobby to the interview room is around 2–3 minutes.

• 90 percent of people you meet will not have read your job-market paper. You will be able to tell who the 10 percent that did are. As a job candidate it really made me feel good knowing someone else in the room read the paper and asked interesting questions. (If a recruiting committee wishes to make a candidate feel good, this is the best thing they can do.) My favorite interviews where those where the audience was “tuned in” and actively thinking through the problems I was describing.

• Nearly every interview asked the following questions in the following order:
  
  1. Small-talk about something: their plans to go skiing after the meetings, the weather, how jet-lagged they are, how they remember Berkeley being a magical/awesome place.
  
  2. “Well you know the drill, tell us about your research.” (This is a quote.)
  
  3. Do you see yourself working only on [your topic] or do you have other interests?

It is important to have specific answers for the last question. Mention the papers you are writing, the theorems you are proving or the dataset that you just gained access to. Make sure to emphasize that you are an economist interested in economically relevant problems.
• Occasionally people would interrupt your discussion with specific questions. Other questions that popped up:
  – How did you come to your research question?
  – Why did you study economics?
  – What would you like to teach?
  – Can you teach [this course]?

• Private sector firms (consulting) would additionally ask your thoughts about private sector versus academic employment. Schools in Europe, South America, Asia, or Australia will also ask if you are serious about moving there. Be truthful in these replies.

• Interviews usually end with the interviewers describing the school, their program, and near-term plans for the department. Sometimes this is quite interesting and at other times they sound not enthusiastic at all. I would not like to be employed in a place where the faculty are not enthusiastic about the direction of the department. If you want to or have to ask questions, here are some easy ones to ask (be sure they apply to your context):
  – Your school is implementing a curriculum change—does this impact what the department will be doing?
  – How do you think the department will evolve in the near term? Are there large initiatives planned?
  – I noticed you recently launch X research center. Can you tell me more about it?
  – I would like to start X initiative to complement my work. Would there be interest among the department’s faculty and students for such a project. (Examples: start a seminar series, organize a conference, build an experimental laboratory, develop better links with industry to gain access to data,...)
  – Tell me more about your graduate students. Is there robust/growing interest in [your topic/field]?

• Be sure to have a social life at the AEA meetings. It is a good time to go out and meet with friends or colleagues. I ran into tons of people whom I knew from elsewhere. There is little you can do to change your research at this stage of the process so just enjoy your time. After a good day of interviews celebrate by buying your friends dinner or a round of drinks. Have fun!

4 Fly-outs

• People will make stupid jokes about ”Berzerkeley” or the Code Pink protestors, and you have to get along with them. You’ll also be interviewing with people who have beef with [name omitted] or other Berkeley profs you may hold in very high regard, and you have to get along with them. Play along until you get an offer.
• Invitations come in waves. The bulk of invitations come within one week of the meet-
ings. Some private sector companies contacted me later with a lag of 10 days following
the meetings. I received an invitation from a very good department nearly a month
after the meetings.

• The advice I received is that if a school invites you for a fly-out directly, you should
accept.

• Occasionally schools would probe whether you are serious about a job there: “We were
impressed with you at the interviews and we are finalizing our fly-out list. Can you let
us know how your side of the market is shaping up?” In this situation I fully revealed
my fly-out listing and said that if you decide to invite me for a fly-out I would happily
accept the invitation. Sometimes schools would write to your advisor to learn your
interest. Be sure your advisor knows what you really care about.

• Don’t pull an all nighter before giving a job talk...

• Be a warm, friendly person. Ultimately, not every half hour interview during your
flyout needs to be about research.

• Get as many frequent flyer miles as possible.

• Don’t get too personal at meals - it is still a professional setting.

• Take snacks to fly-outs - some schools starve you and others stuff you.

• Visiting can actually change your view of a school.

• Practice fly-outs are helpful so it’s good to apply to a lot. These also give you feedback
and they are also publicity for your paper.

• Usually the people in your field are on your side.

• It’s okay to not be perfect, so it’s okay if someone from outside your field gives you a
question from out of left field.

• Be thoughtful with comments and internalize what is being said.

• Follow-up with an email to a professor who asked questions out of left field with a good
response.

• The hardest questions often come from people who like your work a lot.

• It is important to be in control of the seminar and not let questions get you derailed
(practice helps).

• Time your talk well.

• Have audience in mind when writing your presentation. You may need different versions
for different types.
• You will have one-on-one meetings and will have meals with multiple faculty members. The talk will be around 4 in the afternoon so that right afterwards you can go to dinner.

• There are three things you can spend time on to prepare for the flyout

  1. Perfecting the paper
  2. Researching the faculty members
  3. Job talk

  When in doubt, spend time on the job talk rather than the paper. As for researching the faculty you will be meeting with you don’t need to spend a ton of time on this. Spend no more than a day on each department. The most important things to jot down about different faculty members are their area of interest and how it may overlap with your interests. It won’t really pay to spend time reading about research they did that has nothing to do with anything you’re interested in because you’re not going to bring it up and they’re not going to bring it up. People will still follow rules of decorum. This isn’t an interview for a corporate job where they ask you what you can do for them.

• For questions to ask them refer to Cawley. In general have more questions prepared for the junior faculty. They senior faculty will usually have a spiel prepared for you but the junior faculty aren’t as involved in the hiring process so they’re just fulfilling their committee duties and would do better if you drive the conversation. I like to ask questions that relate to how I can be successful in pursuing my next project, whether it’s about funding or time for field research or institutional relationships. It also gives them some clues as to how they can sell their department to you. If you run out of questions to ask, you can always ask them what they’re working on currently.

• For the job talk, prepare good answers to questions that specific people in the department may ask you this usually applies only to two or three people whose work is close to yours and you’ll know what their questions are likely to be. Tailor the literature review section to each department if applicable. And if someone made a good suggestion during the AEA meetings, definitely incorporate it and bring attention to the fact that you’ve incorporated it for the job talk.

• Remember that the department really wants it to work out as well. They don’t have unlimited funds to spend and don’t have all the time in the world to do faculty search. They’re not there just to scrutinize you - they’re hoping that it’s a fit. In fact I thought it was easier to talk to people interviewing me than to talk to a lot of professors in the department. For one thing, they don’t make me feel like I need to justify why I’m taking up their time.

• Look for people who are in their 30s and 40s and have reasonable family lives.

• Differences in the lives of professors at different departments become really clearly early in interviews and visits, especially visits.
• Submit receipts from flyouts as soon as possible after the flyout. They will take weeks to reimburse, and credit card bills can start to add up.

• When scheduling fly outs to multiple schools in one trip, clarify with them who is paying for each part of your trip

• If you schedule a flight to leave earlier than a school had you flying out (even if only a few hours), check it with them before booking the flight.

Typical Schedule

The typical fly-out at a school is described below. Interviews with consulting firms and government/central-banks may be similar.

1. Arrive one day before.

2. Breakfast with a faculty member, usually around 8am. Some places did not do this and you were on your own for breakfast. In this case, the day may start quite late around 9 or 10am.

3. Meetings of approximately 30 minutes with department faculty and occasionally deans and administrators. Typically, you get to describe your research and ask questions. Many of my meetings were taken up entirely by small-talk. Some of my meetings ran over-time. If the schedule starts to lag, do not worry.

The most awkward question during one-on-one meetings was: “Where else are you flying out to?” and “Do you have any offers that we should know about?” The first question is awkward either way you answer it. Either the schools you mention are much better than your current interviewer (and they infer you are out of their league) or the schools you mention are not as good as your current interviewer (and they infer you are a lemon). Be truthful in replying to these questions. Often you can get out of fully revealing these lists by telling an anecdote or funny story from your last fly-out. This is usually enough to jolt the discussion to something less awkward.

Here are some more questions people asked:

- If someone looks at your CV in 5 years, what do you want them to think?
- Which papers will you write 4-5 years in the future?
- Explain [this from your job-market paper] to me?

Meetings with deans and administrators were a little different. Often they want you to describe your research (they are not economists, but usually very erudite). Also, they often tell you about the university. In terms of questions, I often asked about their opinion of the economics department—do they want to expand it, is it a priority field, etc. At some schools I would notice a divergence of opinions between the department chair and the dean, suggesting there is some tension.

4. Lunch with a group of faculty members. Typically this at the local faculty club or restaurant. I would recommend a light lunch (sandwich or salad) followed by a coffee or espresso.
5. More meetings. Many people want to take you for a coffee in the afternoon.

6. Seminar presentation. This can vary in when it is scheduled. I had 9:30, 11:35, 12:00, 13:05, 15:30, and 16:00 start times, for example. 90 minutes is the norm (or 80 minutes if the school follows the local version of Berkeley time.) Sometimes, you have less time than normal. At consulting firms, 60 minutes was the norm, and often you are doing a video conference with other offices. One department asked only for a 40 minute job-talk. Ask beforehand how much time you have. One school surprised me when I was setting up the talk.

I gave many talks during lunch. In this case, please try to eat before hand. The 9:30 seminar time is actually really nice because then people can speak about your work thoughtfully in the one-on-one meetings.

There are always problems with the projector. Once, the department chairman jumped onto a table to adjust the projector settings. Have a copy of your slides on a memory key.

7. Dinner with faculty. This is typically at a nice restaurant. Most of the time, you can order two courses. A good host will order first and that will give you a cue as to what is the appropriate price-range for dishes and how much to order. When offered, I always choose to drink wine and I ordered desert with coffee or tea. I would pass on offers of an aperitif. If you are asked to pick the wine, choose a Pinot Noir as it will likely pair well with most things on the menu. Do not be a wine snob.

Topics of conversation included politics, current events, and economics (both popular and research oriented discussion). People often mention their family or recent travel.

At the meals the smallness of the profession really becomes evident. Occasionally, people gossip or cut-down others; this was not cool. Coming from Berkeley, many people asked about the financial situation here. For instance: “I heard [this person] has an offer from [some school], are they moving?” I would refuse to engage in this speculation, truthfully claiming ignorance of the situation.

8. Depart the following day.

9. Thank you notes. I sent thank you e-mails to every person that I met during the fly-out. I tried to either follow-up on a point of our discussion or mention something that came up in our talk. For people who were only at meals or who met with me as a group, I would send a group thank you note.

4.0.1 “Formal Interview”

This happens at schools in the United Kingdom. The formal interview I had was a panel interview of 30 minutes with the Dean, Associate Dean, Department Chair, and Recruitment Chair. This was a very formal affair in a fancy wood-paneled boardroom with the deans making notes on a copy of my CV. If you radiate confidence and enthusiasm, this is an easy hurdle. Some questions they asked:
Why do you want to work at [our school]?

What is left for you to do to complete your degree?

Describe your research in 5 minutes.

What is the status of these papers you have listed on your CV?

How would you fit in with the department here?

I assume you can teach all of the standard courses: microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics?

4.0.2 Visits to Research Facilities

I occasionally perform experiments and most schools showed me their labs. Nearly all labs were underutilized and many were very impressive.

4.0.3 Touristy Stuff

Most fly-outs do not have any meaningful “time off” planned. Many hosts were quite positively surprised when they learned that I went to a concert or a local art museum the previous day.

- Take only carry-on luggage and pack light.

- Book only direct flights if you can. (Pay extra and get reimbursed.) Also, do not worry about being loyal to your favorite frequent flier program. Schedule flights based on departure times and convenience first. For example, 6 am flights from SFO are very painful.

- Keep some cash separate from your wallet. (I had a huge scare at O’Hare airport when suddenly I could not find my wallet and my flight was boarding! All turned out okay.)

- If your airline offers text-message or phone notifications of flight status/cancellations, please sign up for this! Knowing this in advance lets you change travel plans quickly. It helped me during a snow storm in New York.

- I like adventure so I endeavor to take public transit from airports in strange cities whenever I can. You will get reimbursed for taxi rides so do not feel the need to pinch pennies like this. (In Europe, do however take the train/subway as it is typically better than a cab. Some European schools will also tell you not to take a taxi because of cost.)

- Take the necessary power adapters when flying overseas. I kept together all of my power / laptop / presentation accessories in one ziploc bag so they did not get lost.
• When arranging fly-outs overseas, be aware of visa restrictions and the logistics needed to get a visa to your destination. (For example, if you have to leave your passport at the X consulate, you likely cannot travel at all during the waiting period for a visa as well, unless you have other acceptable identification documents.) Those inviting you will not think about this constraint.

• Keep all receipts and boarding passes. I was surprised to learn that boarding passes are often needed to get reimbursed for travel.

Cancelled Travel

I had to cancel a job talk due to flight cancelations and a winter storm. I know others who cancelled talks because of illness. This is my take on the situation.

- Once there is a flight cancelation, call the coordinator and chair at the school you are visiting and inform them of the delay and learn what they want you to do.
- If they offer to reschedule your visit, take them up on this offer if it is feasible giving your schedule.
- If they insist on you presenting only on the day that they originally scheduled, you are almost out of luck. You can rent a car and drive to your destination. Do this only if you are certain the drive will be a safe one (there is a reason the flight was cancelled). Remember you will be tired and stressed during this long drive in a winter storm so this is really not a good idea both in terms of personal safety and your energy at your destination. I would never recommend doing this but some people suggested the idea to me.
- If either of these options is not feasible thank the institution for inviting you and move on. Perhaps secure a mutual promise to get back in touch in a month if either side’s job market does not turn out well. Remember, they are as disappointed as you are that the scheduling did not work out at the last minute.

5 Offers

• I was surprised to see that most schools do not send you the contract right away. Instead they send an offer letter outlining the general terms and a contract will follow once you accept the terms of the letter. The offer letter may be short on many details. It may mention salary but neglect discussion of fringe benefits, such as health insurance, that may be important given individual circumstances. Be sure to ask about these if they are important to you. I have heard of situations where positions for spouses / significant others are part of the offer or they are negotiated into it. In terms of negotiation and/or offer conditions, really consult with your advisor as to what is the best course of action for you.
• You can negotiate based on what will make you a good assistant professor and not just compared with other schools. Also, use packages from other schools (generically) to convince them, because some schools may be out-of-date with current norms.

6 Big Picture

• Don’t take yourself so seriously. Shachar got it right. Not everything is about you. That’s the best job market advice I’ve ever heard.

• You will get a job.

• Be aware that the timing can be rough, especially if doing a dual search. Some things come up really early (e.g., IMF) with exploding deadlines, etc. Try to schedule flyouts keeping in mind when their first round interviews end and when you may be put to a decision (or how long you would have to wait if you miss the first cut).

• Be aware of your letter writers network of coauthors, grad school classmates, etc. These are the schools you are most likely to get interviews, flyouts, offers, etc. This network matters at every stage - not just for getting interviews, but also for getting flyouts and offers. I didn’t realize how important this was until I looked at the 100% correlation between the network and my flyouts and offers (the correlation was much lower at the interview stage). If you really want to go to a particular place you should try to get a faculty member with a good network to that place to write a letter, on your committee, etc.

• There are more women outside of academia.

• Public sector recruiters are looking for fit and interest more than the quality of your research.

• More generally, think of interviews and flyouts as a way to get attention for your paper and get it published. What whether or not you get the job, there’s still a lot of value in presenting your research. Most of departments, whether you decline them or they decline to give you an offer, will invite you to give a talk there in the future. It’s really a small community and no one wants to burn bridges or leave a bad impression.

• Lastly, you do learn a lot about your own preferences for an academic job while on the market. You’re treated very differently when you’re a potential colleague than when you’re just a grad student, as in you get a lot more respect. If you don’t know that you want to be an academic for sure, give the academic market a chance anyway; I am much more excited about academia than I was before the market.

• If you have a joint location problem to solve, consider variations in the signal sent to different types of schools:

  1. big research university in a major metro area: possibly no need to say anything, since lots of combinations of jobs might be feasible;
2. uncommutable liberal arts school in tiny rural college town: ”perhaps you would also be interested in my spouse/partner/etc.”

Each time you send this piece of information, however you send it, you could increase the probability of a joint offer, or you could decrease the probability of a solo offer (either, both, or maybe neither). If offers explode in general, there might not be much time for a school to do something about your joint location problem after they make you an offer. So whether you want to do this at all, and how, certainly depends on your personal and joint preferences. Probably also depends on your number of offers, which seems awfully hard to predict in advance.

- Keeping marital status secret is a double-edged sword.
- Places will get pissed at you if you spring a partner for them to hire on them after the fly-out.
- Expect anything you say to anyone to be told to everyone, but it’s like telephone and it gets garbled, so if you want information to get out, get an advisor to call schools.
- Do not over emphasize location preference
- It’s best to be yourself.
- People do want to see passion about your work and your topic and not just about success.
- Do some soul searching on your values and priorities in the fall

You are having to make big decisions about the direction of your life. Knowing what you want going into the interviews will increase your chances that you end up with a good fit. Waiting until Jan/Feb to do this soul searching means that you will be going through a lot of internal confusion at the same time you are trying to interview. That is too much pressure.

At the same time, you also have to keep an open mind, knowing that you are juggling multiple values. How important is work-life balance? Location? What type of location? Research opportunities? Department life? Quality of students? On the job market, you are pitting these things against one another, and it really helps to know how they rank in your priorities.

- Be intentional about seeking serenity.
There is just a lot that is out of your control during the process. Flight problems, other people (including interviewers) stressing out, miscommunications, travelling discomforts, department politics, etc. I was amazed by the physical toll that travelling took on me. Having a way let go emotionally of the things that are not in your control, I think, is an indispensible tool for the job market. The serenity prayer is helpful: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Talking to people can be helpful if they have a good mindset, but it can exacerbate the stress if they dont.