

# POSTDOC POSITIONS

*What are they good for? How does it all work?  
Finding and Applying for Positions*

## WHAT IS A “POSTDOC POSITION”?

A postdoc is a paid placement for the purpose of gaining scientific, technical, and other professional skills that advance the professional career. It is temporary in nature, lasting from 1-5 years depending upon your discipline and the type of postdoctoral position. Most placements include the following components:

- Full time research
- Writing (grant writing and publications)
- Presentation and Dissemination activities
- Supervision of junior lab members
- Teaching and mentoring (less common)
- Compensation (salary, benefits, and travel support vary by host institution)

## IS A POSTDOC FOR ME?

- ⇒ *Is a postdoc a pre-requisite for a career in your discipline?*
- ⇒ *Do you have a passion for research?*
- ⇒ *Will it help you advance your career?*

## HOW DO I APPLY?

Postdoc funding is available via faculty grants, or federal agency, private foundation, or industry fellowships and placements.

- **Prepare early!** Since a big part of obtaining a postdoc position involves networking, early preparation (while you are still a graduate student) is key.
- **Decide on goals and expectations.** What skills, knowledge, and experience do you need to achieve your career goals? Once you have a set of goals and expectations, you can assess how a postdoc can help you achieve those goals, and you can prioritize your applications based on what the postdoc position will provide you in regards to furthering your career.
- **Network, network, network!** Early on, when you are still a student, make connections at labs where you may want to postdoc. Express your interest in potential



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postdoc positions to faculty you meet at professional conferences. Talk to current postdocs about their experiences with different labs and organizations. Strive to make research connections outside of your university while you are still a graduate student.

- **Talk to potential advisors.** Talk to potential advisors about your interest in a future postdoc position.
- **Talk to lab members.** Talk to current postdocs about their experience with different advisers to get a sense for with whom and where you might like to work. Get a sense for how current postdocs are faring in their positions. Are they happy? Are they publishing? Do they have recommendations for potential advisors?
- **Search for portable fellowships.** Search for federal and private postdoc fellowships that are portable (meaning you can take the funding with you to any lab/institution). Search on [www.pathwaystoscience.org](http://www.pathwaystoscience.org)
- **Start early with a calendar of deadlines and action items.**

For more details, visit [The Resource Toolbox](#) at [www.pathwaystoscience.org](http://www.pathwaystoscience.org)

*We'd love to hear your thoughts about this information! Please take a few seconds to share your ideas at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Postdoc\\_WhatWhyHow](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Postdoc_WhatWhyHow)*



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