
How to choose a post-doc position

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Our goals in doing a post-doc

- Good science
- Study and develop as scientists
- Return to academia as PIs
- “Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans.”
-- John Lennon

Should we do a post-doc abroad?

- Yes!
- Vital step of professional growth
- Complex, frightening process. Tough adjustments upon arrival and return
- An experience for the entire family!
- Life abroad

Me

- PhD in Computer Science and Comp. Biology
- Post-doc in UC Berkeley, 2008-12
- My wife did a post-doc in parallel (LBNL)
- Left with two boys (5yo, 1.5yo), returned with another girl
- Member of university's Gender Committee (post-doc is a huge obstacle for women in science)

Choosing where to go?

- A research field that you find exciting
- A lab that fits you as a researcher
- Where you are most likely to succeed
- A place that suits your family best

Ask yourself

- What are my strong points?
- What type of a lab suits me?
- Where do I imagine myself in 5 / 10 years
- Am I really made for research?

Am I good enough? (The Imposter syndrome)

- Used to be attributed to successful women
- Common among gifted kids and adults
(yes, also in the academia)
- Performance attributions - ייחוס הצלחה וכשלון
- Success is dismissed as luck or deception
- **Consult with scientists you appreciate**

Finding your new field of research

- **Post-doc - chance to change your field**
- What would you like to do in the near future?
- “Read the map” and identify trends
- What do you find exciting?
- **Follow your heart**

Attend a conference

- Meet with central figures in your community
- Possible advisors
- Consult with other students and post-docs
- Identify trends / future directions in your research field
- **Follow your heart**

What lab would match you best?

- A young PI or an older & established PI?
- A smaller or a larger lab?
- Independent research or micro-managed?
- Equipment you would need? Funding?
- Local collaborations?

Where to go (geographically)?

- A large scientific center (e.g. Boston)?
- How “isolated” is the university?
(Jobs for spouse? Quality of schools?)
- Local Israeli/Jewish/Arab community?
- Distance from Israel (and time difference)
- Language
- Weather and local attractions
- Cost of living (housing, schools)

Life in California

- We had many many trips and hikes
- A huge opportunity to have fun!
- Countless trips (weekends, Sundays)

- Some motivation to why you **MUST** consider a post-doc.

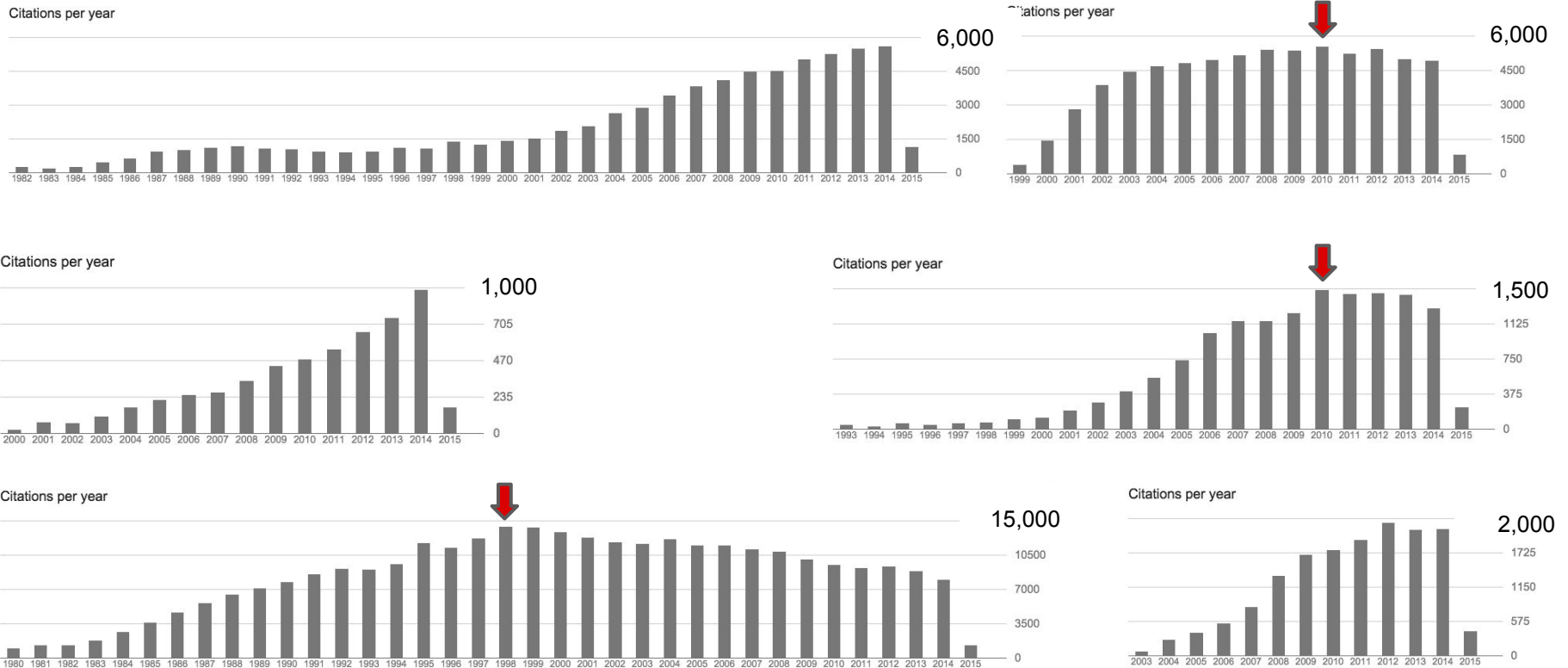
Finding the right PI

(yes, this is hard detective work)

- Scan the publication list of each PI
 - Filter irrelevant papers
 - **Any recent papers that excite you?**
- Number of publications per student per year
- **How well did previous post-docs do?**
 - Where published? Authorship?
 - Have they found a job?
- **Consult with other people and the field (listen, and read between the lines)**

Pick a “winning horse”

- Choose the PIs that will be leaders in 5 years
- Watch out for tired, momentum-driven PIs



Start early (>1 year before graduation)

- Think of ~10 possible labs
- **Ask for people's help in introducing you**
- Send a short mail (with CV)
- Clearly state who are you, who is your advisor, main publications
- Be assertive and polite
- If they don't reply, **don't take it personally.** Nagging is okay (once).

Visit the lab (a must!)

- Usually, a full day with a talk and meetings.
- Plan ahead and prepare:
 - Read some recent papers
 - Think of possible research questions
- Remember the two goals of your visit:
 - Advertise yourself and your capabilities
 - Meet the PI and their group
- **Don't take anything for granted. Ask!**

Manage and match expectations - minimize future problems

- **Know what to expect, and let them know what to expect of you**
- Duration of the post-doc
- Funding sources
- Leading your project
- Salary and health benefits
- Working days / hours / vacations

Meet lab members

- Ask about their research
- Lab atmosphere (solidarity? competition?)
- Equipment - do they have what they need?
- Working with the PI (pros and cons)
 - How often do they meet and talk about work?
 - Preparing a manuscript? Conferences?
- Any expected changes (relocation, grants)
- Cost of living, housing, education, weather

Ask yourself and others

- Is the PI a leading figure that will support you?
- Have you two connected?
Excited about similar things?
- How independent will you be?
- Are lab members happy to come in the morning?
- Duration of fellowship / cost of living
- How supportive is the environment (dept / university)

After your visit

- Send a polite mail and thank your hosts
- You could try negotiating on your salary (“fixed” pay ranks, experience, benefits)
- Ask (politely) if they can refund flight / stay
- It might take a while to prepare a full job offer
- Remember to notify labs you have declined

My Family and Other Animals

- Be sensitive and plan thoroughly
- **Happy spouse = happy house**
- Ask about possible jobs.
Use local connections (formal and informal)
- Social aspects - find other Israelis
Some would be your 2nd family

Tap the wisdom of the crowd

- Find Israelis and other post-docs
- Ask:
 - Where to live
 - Where to get stuff
 - Schools, daycare, etc.
 - Cars and insurance
 - Leisure

Visa, Health insurance, Grants, and Tax treaties

- USA - long, cumbersome process (months)
- “International Offices” in most universities
- In the meanwhile, apply for indep. funding
- **US-Israeli Tax Treaty**
You may be exempt from federal tax for two years

US-Israeli Tax Treaty

ARTICLE 23 - Teachers

Where a resident [of Israel] ... is invited by ... a university ... to come ... for a period not expected to exceed 2 years for the purpose of ... engaging in research ... at a university or ... educational institution, his income ... shall be **exempt from tax** ... for a period not exceeding **2 years** from the date of his arrival in that other Contracting State

[Read ARTICLE 24, “Students and Trainees” as well]

What if things go wrong?

- **Sometime we fail**
- Bad chemistry with PI, negative results, poor choice of project / lab
- Try to admit failure early, and contain damage
- It's usually possible to switch project or lab
- **The champions make their own luck**
(be ambitious and exploit your opportunities)

Bottom line

- An amazing experience for you and family
- **Don't give up on your dreams.** Let your family know how important this is for you.
- It only seems frightening and complicated
- Keep in touch with scientists in Israel
- **Remember to have fun!**

Background and credit

- [US relocation tips](#)
by Gill Bejerano
- [Ten Simple Rules for Selecting a Postdoctoral Position](#)
Philip E Bourne ,Iddo Friedberg
- [Finding a Postdoc Position](#)
by Jerry Breslin
- [How to find the right postdoc lab](#)
by Ron Milo / Maya Schuldiner
- [Selecting Your First Post-Doctoral Position](#)
by Catherine M. Fuller
- [Survival strategies for choosing the right postdoc position](#)
by Duncan T Odom
- [Selecting and Succeeding in a Postdoc Position](#)
- [Advice on Choosing a Successful Post-doctoral Position](#)
by Gráinne Whitman, Brian Guzik and Larry Goldstein
- [Choosing a Postdoc](#)
by Sean Carroll

פוסט-דוקטורט בצפון אמריקה: איך נערכים להרפתקה הזו? ●

Thanks and good luck!

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