PhD Job Search - Tips and Timeline

The PhD job search can be a confusing process for a variety of reasons. The doctoral graduation timeline is often unclear and may not be fully within your control. For industry positions, your mentors in academia may be unfamiliar with non-academic norms and expectations. However, there are tools and resources that can help you prepare for this process and develop a plan of action.

Job Search Timeline

General peak PhD recruitment timelines for different fields and positions *assuming June Graduation*.

	Year-round	Summer	Fall	Spring
Industry	Biotech; Patent Law; Data Science; Government positions (the earlier the better)	Management Consulting; Chemistry	Finance; CS/Tech; Tech consulting; Biotech	Consulting leadership program applications; CS/Tech; Nonprofits; Science communication
Academic Faculty		Applications start to open for faculty positions	Applications due (summer for some); Smaller school interviews late-fall	Faculty interviews early to mid-spring
Postdocs		Most postdoc positions	Government; National Labs	

When should I start my job search? What if I missed peak recruitment times?
The job search varies widely in process, norms and expectations. It is never too early to research your interest areas by searching online, attending events, and initiating informal career conversations. Even if you missed the peak recruiting season for your field, you can continue to inquire about opportunities through networking and online job search websites.

What if I am graduating in December?
Keep in mind that the start date of a position can often be negotiated. Also, the needs of employers vary so positions can open or start on a more flexible timeline.

Have more questions? Make an appointment with CAPD: capd.mit.edu/services/appointments

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Job Search Tips

- **Identify your skills, interests, and values**: PhD candidates have a unique background and blend of skills that may be transferrable to a variety of industries. It's helpful that you start your career search with a self-assessment of what motivates you, what interests you, and what skills (both technical and interpersonal) you possess. Taking the time to reflect on these questions will allow you to build stronger resumes, write more compelling cover letters, and interview with focus and confidence.

  Helpful self-assessment tool: Various assessment tools are available that were made with PhDs in mind. These include MyIDP (Individual Development Plan), ChemIDP and ImaginePhD (capd.mit.edu/explore-careers/careers-phds)

  Network early and often: It's never too early to network, gather information, and try on different roles or career paths. Anytime during your graduate career, it's helpful to attend career fairs and information sessions of companies that you are interested in. You can also learn more about specific industries through informational interviews or applying to summer internships and IAP externships.

  Helpful networking tool: MIT Alumni Advisors Hub (conduct informational interviews or career conversations with MIT alumni working in various industries)

- **The job search is best done as a collaborative process**: Do not feel that you have to tackle your job search on your own. When in doubt, ask for help from your advisor, your department, and of course, CAPD is always happy to assist you in this process.

  Make an appointment with a career advisor: capd.mit.edu/services/appointments

- **Other helpful resources:**
  - CAPD Career Handbook for resume/cover letter examples and much more (capd.mit.edu/resources/career-handbook)
  - CareerBridge powered by Handshake for CAPD appointments and job searches (mit.joinhandshake.com/login)
  - Graduating Student Outcome Survey for data on post-graduation outcomes and starting salaries (capd.mit.edu/resources/survey-data)
  - LinkedIn, Indeed, and professional associations for networking and job listings