

AEA INTERVIEW PRACTICE MANUAL¹

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Summary

- Form a group to **practice** your 30 minutes AEA **interview** during December.
- 3-4 members in one group, get together for lunch during weekdays (everyday, or at least 3-4 times a week), and talk your 10-15 minutes summary of your JMP to other members. Other members can eat lunch while listening, so 1-1.5 hour lunch time every day will be enough.

Benefit:

- If you practice every day in December, you will be able to keep speaking your script even when you got stumped by a sharp or mean question from interviewers. You may be able to think of something else (to defend their attack) while you speak your JMP if you **practice** enough.
- AEA half an hour **interview** is a very challenging game, so the more **practice**, the better. Since the econ job market is almost efficient, a small perturbation from the average level of **interview** skill can make a drastic difference.

Interview script:

It is good to have "onion" type structure for your **interview** script.

- (a) for the first 3-5 minutes, make a very concise and accessible description of your JMP, including motivation, problem (issue) and contribution. *Emphasize your contribution.*
- (b) For the next 10-15 minutes, you will detail your JMP again, but still in a very clear way.
- (c) If you still have time after (a) and (b), talk about some meaningful follow-up works from your JMP (If you already are doing some, talk about that).

This "onion" type structure is for the case you won't have a chance to proceed from (a) to (b) (or (b) to (c)) due to the active interruptions.

Feedback from a former participant: this onion type structure was great and helpful during the interviews.

Types of interviews:

There are typically 3 types of **interview**.

- (i) No response: this happens a lot, so you will have to explain your research during 25-30 minutes, without much interruption.
- (ii) Field specific: if there's someone who knows your research very well, there will be many interactions. Happens sometimes.
- (iii) Jerk: in a few cases, there is some mean guy(s) trying to stump you. Not happens a lot.
- Therefore, it is desirable to do some role-playing accordingly.
- *Feedback from a former participant:* it depends on the fields. In finance for example, most of the interviews were very interactive, hence type (ii).

¹ Mostly based on some personal experience, so please use this at your own risk. Please do not circulate without the author's permission. In particular, please use *within our UIUC econ department*.

The first week

For the first week, focus on (i) “no response” case. So just eat your lunch and do not respond too much. During these practice, you will be used to your own script. You will very likely keep revising it.

The second week

From the first week of practice, you will be now familiar to each other’s job market paper. We can now begin simulating (ii) “field specific” **interview**. So please interrupt each other as much as possible, and try to ask some tough questions to each other.

At the end of the second week, we can start practicing job market seminar 75-90 minutes. The most efficient way is to make your 30 min interview script embedded into the introduction of your job talk. Then, you will just need to manage the remaining 45-60 minutes.

When your interviewers like you a lot during AEA interview, they will likely to invite you right after AEA. Thus you at least need to finalize your job talk slides before going to Philly.

Pairwise match between members would be efficient, so 2.5-3 hours total for everyone.

The third week

Continue to interrupt each other as much as possible, and try to ask some tough questions to each other. These are preparing both (ii) “field specific” and (iii) “jerk” type interviews.

Also practice 75-90 minutes job talk once, in addition to the 30min interview practice.

The last week

You are now very comfortable with your interview script from the past 3 weeks practice. Keep practicing through the last week to maintain your skills.

At the end of the last week, another job market seminar practice.

Good luck!

Summary of feedback from former participants

- It was helpful with the suggested time frame.
- The onion type structure of the interview script was great and helpful during the interviews.
- “It was in general key to keep us organized and in good timing for the market.”