LANDING INTERVIEWS CHEAT SHEET

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Landing Interviews Cheat Sheet

This guide will walk you through everything you need to know to start landing data science interviews.

Whatever the state of the job market, these tips will give you strategies for landing data science interviews. The cheat sheet covers:

- Where to look for jobs

- Methods for getting interviews

- An action plan to keep your job search organized

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▼ 🔍 Where to Find Job Opportunities?

The first thing you have to consider when you want to land interviews is where to search for jobs. There are two places that you should check for data science job opportunities:

1. **Company websites.** Go directly to the source and look for opportunities at companies you want to work for.

   To make things a bit easier, we have collected a list of companies hiring data scientists.

   - Companies Hiring Data Scientists

2. **LinkedIn** → **Jobs**

📌 Some job openings on LinkedIn are not on their company website and vice versa. To ensure you have up to date information and are aware of all opportunities it pays to always check both.

3. Leverage smaller job boards

- https://wellfound.com/jobs

- https://ai-jobs.net/?cat=3&cou=238&key=&exp=

▼ Picking Positions

When you start job searching you will probably find a lot of jobs with similar sounding titles. So…

🤔 **How do you know which positions you should apply for?**

Here are a few rules to keep in mind:

- Target these positions:
  - Data Scientist
  - Data Analyst
- You **can** apply for jobs even if you are not a 100% match in terms of what they are looking for. Oftentimes, companies cannot find someone who meets all the requirements. You could still be a very competitive candidate!
- With that in mind, **try to target positions that are an 80% match.**
  - e.g. A job post requires 5+ years of experience but you only have 3 years of experience.

▼ ⭐ Three Ways to Get Interviews

Typically, there are 3 ways to get interviews:

1. **Submitting applications**
   a. Apply on websites or job boards, such as LinkedIn, indeed, etc

2. **Reaching out to gatekeepers**
   a. Send cold emails or LinkedIn messages to HMs and recruiters
   b. Shows a good initiative that you are interested in the position

3. **Getting Referrals**
   a. Higher chance of landing interviews
   b. Give you a step up over other candidates who are just as qualified as you but don't have that personal touch.

🚩 Here is a diagram showing the amount of effort and the effectiveness of these three methods. Getting a referral is the most effective way, but it requires the most amount of time and effort (assuming you don't know anyone to refer you yet).
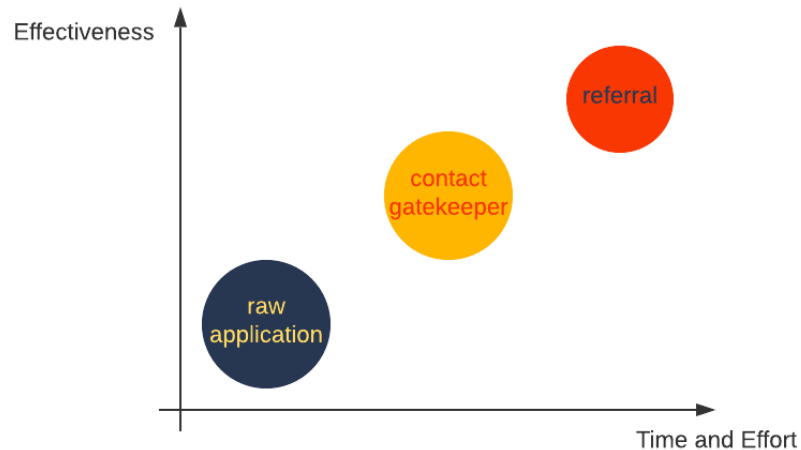
🔑 **These methods are not mutually exclusive. Using multiple methods to apply for the same position with the same company is recommended.**

▼ 1️⃣ Submitting Applications

🚦 Typically there are more than 400 applications for each opening at any tech company. For top-tier tech companies, the number is even higher.

As you can see, both of the jobs below have over 200 applicants in just a couple of weeks!

Data Scientist, Sales & Success
Notion · San Francisco, CA (On-site) 2 weeks ago · Over 200 applicants

💼 Full-time

▦ 201-500 employees · Software Development

👥 1 connection · 10 school alumni

☷ Skills: Data Science, Python (Programming Language), +8 more

Senior Data Scientist, Square Go

Square · San Francisco, CA (Remote) 1 week ago · Over 200 applicants

💼 Full-time · Associate

🏢 1,001–5,000 employees · Software Development

👥 14 connections · 48 school alumni

✔ Skills: Data Science, Data Engineering, +8 more

That means that if you rely solely on submitting an application, the chances that you will get a response are slim. You are competing against a mountain of candidates!

Even if you are qualified, recruiters may not have a chance to review your application before the position is filled. So what can you do?

🔥 **It's important to reach out to gatekeepers.**

▼ 2️⃣ Reaching Out to Gatekeepers

▼ Who Is a Gatekeeper?

- A gatekeeper refers to a technical recruiter or a hiring manager (HM).
- Gatekeepers give you a green light ✅ and open the door to you to move forward. They are the ones who're going to get you interviews if they believe you are qualified.

▼ How to Find Gatekeepers

Sometimes the gatekeeper will be listed like on the job post below:

Senior Machine Learning Engineer, TikTok Social

TikTok · San Jose, CA 2 weeks ago · **18 applicants**

💼 $187,040/yr – $280,000/yr · Full-time

🏢 10,001+ employees · Entertainment Providers

👥 33 connections · 147 school alumni

James ▓▓▓▓ is hiring for this job

✔ Skills: Data Engineering, Data Science, +8 more

Apply ↗   **Save**

Sometimes the job will not list a specific person, and you will need to find the gatekeeper yourself, like in the below example:

There are a couple of ways to look for gatekeepers that are not listed on the job:

1. We have searched and added hiring managers and recruiters to the list below, so you can leverage that.

   - Companies Hiring Data Scientists

2. For companies *not* on this list, search on LinkedIn using keywords

   - **Data Science Manager.** Select those who specifically mention "We're hiring" or "I'm hiring" and have at least 1 year of experience with their current company.

     - e.g. Data Science Manager Tiktok

   - **Technical recruiter** Select those who specifically mention "We're hiring" and have at least 1 year of experience with their current company.

     - e.g. Technical Recruiter Uber
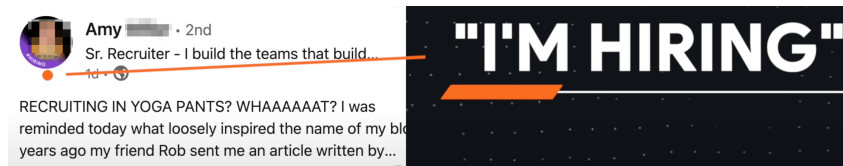
👉 **Pro Tip**: For quicker response times and increased chances of success, it's recommended to reach out to **both a hiring manager and a recruiter** at the same company. Having multiple contacts can enhance your success rate to land interviews.

▼ Initial Reach out

Once you have found a gatekeeper, then what?

You need to locate their contact information and use it to reach out. This information can typically be found on LinkedIn and you may also see their email address.

▼ Email

After obtaining their email, you can send a brief and compelling pitch to introduce yourself.

> 📌 It's a good idea to do some research on the company and explain why you'll be a good fit for that position.

Here's a template you can use for this:

👬 **Initial Email Pitch**

Subject: *Introduction - [YOUR NAME]*

> *Hi [NAME],*
>
> *I hope this email finds you well. My name is [NAME] and I wanted to introduce myself to you as I am eager to become part of the data science team at [COMPANY].*
>
> *I am a highly motivated data scientist based in [LOCATION], with [EXPERIENCE]. I am impressed with [Company's efforts to solve problems, or Company's values or mission] and would love to learn more about the hiring process for the data science team.*
>
> *To give you a quick idea of my background and skills, here's a brief overview:*
>
> - *I am a [1 sentence describing your current status, e.g. role in a job or as a student].*
> - *With a focus on [1 sentence highlighting your expertise].*
> - *I am proud of my achievement in [briefly describe your highest accomplishment, keeping it concise].*
>
> *I understand you are busy, but I would love the opportunity to discuss further if there is potential for a role that aligns with my skills and experience. Please find my resume attached for your reference.*
>
> *Thank you for your time and consideration.*
>
> Best regards,
> [NAME]

▼ LinkedIn

If you are reaching out to the gatekeeper through LinkedIn, you first need to connect with them and then message them concerning the job.

▼ Connection Message

Your invitation is almost on its way   ✕

✅ You can add a note to personalize your invitation to **Sam
Barrows**.

(Add a note)   **Send**

🌟 Always send a personal note to the gatekeeper. A small amount of effort can lead to a
big chance of connecting with someone.

Keep it concise because of the word limit (300 characters). Here are two different examples of a
connect message and an idea for a third type of message.

- **Mutual Interest**

  > Hi [NAME], we're both in the data science industry, and I have no
  > doubt that you are building great products at [COMPANY]. I would
  > love to connect and learn from you!

- **Expand Network**

  > Hi [NAME], I'm expanding my network with the data science
  > industry. Your Linkedin profile of building your career in the last 10+
  > years from ___ to ___ is impressive. I would love to connect and
  > learn from you!

- **Mutual Connection** - You can also use a mutual connection as a point of contact to
  connect with a gatekeeper.

▼ **First Message**

Once you have connected, you can then send a message about job opportunities. Here's a
template for crafting that message:

> Hi [NAME], I wanted to connect and see if I can learn more about your
> open opportunities within [COMPANY]. Here's a brief highlight of my data
> science background in the [SPACE]:
>
> - I am a [1 sentence describing your role].
> - With a focus on [1 sentence highlighting your expertise].
> - I am proud of my achievement in [briefly describe your highest

> *accomplishment, keeping it concise].*
>
> *I have attached my resume for your convenience.*
> *Thank you,*
> *[Your First Name]*

> 🌟 Note: It's helpful to attach your resume so that they can see your qualifications immediately.

▼ Follow-ups

That first message is not the end of reaching out to gatekeepers though! You should expect to send more than one message because…

> 🌈 **Opportunities are in the follow-ups.**

Some people say, "Reaching out to gatekeepers does not work for me because they do not respond."

However, we cannot expect people, especially strangers, to respond to every email or message we send. They might be busy and not have time to respond. Instead, we should continue following up with them and show our interest and persistence.

If haven't received any response in a week - send a follow-up message.

But how long should you follow up?

> ✅ A general rule of thumb
>
> If the job post is still up, you can continue following up weekly.
>
> Once they take the post down, you don't need to continue doing so.

Here's an example of a follow up message:

Follow-up email / LinkedIn message

> *Hi [NAME],*
>
> *Hope you're having a great week! I know how busy you probably are, but I just wanted to follow up on the [email/message] I sent you earlier.*
>
> *I am excited about the opportunity to join the data science team at [COMPANY] and [solve problems with the team or contribute to the*

company].

Please let me know if it would be helpful for me to provide any additional information as you move on to the next stage in the hiring process.

I look forward to hearing from you,

[YOUR NAME]

> 💡 **Pro Tip:** Use https://chat.openai.com/chat to draft different versions of follow-up emails.

▼ 3️⃣ Getting Referrals

Getting referrals can be intimidating if you've never used this method before, but this method has several benefits including:

- Getting a job is easier. It's the most effective method of the three!

- It gives you a chance to be introduced to other professionals and expand your network.

▼ Who Should You Ask for a Referral?

> 📣 **Never** ask someone you don't know for a referral. This is unprofessional.

Instead, **leverage your existing network**. Any connection can be helpful.

- Ask friends and people in your network to refer you and give you glowing referrals to their companies.

- These people do not have to be data scientists. They just need to know you and be willing to connect you with the hiring team.

Here is a template for asking someone you already know for a referral:

> *Hi [Name],*
> *How's it going? I hope you're doing well, especially with everything that's been going on lately.*
>
> *I noticed you're still with [Company], which is awesome! I'd love to catch up with you and hear more about how things are going there.*
>
> *By the way, I'm currently on the lookout for a data scientist position and I was wondering if you could help me out. Do you think you could refer me to [Company]? It would mean a lot to me and I would greatly appreciate it.*

> *If you're up for it, we could schedule a quick call to chat and catch up. Let me know if that works for you.*
>
> *Thanks and take care!*
>
> *Best,*
> *[Your Name]*

▼ 👍 After they've said "Yes"

If they say yes, then what do you do? How do referrals actually work?

📌 The goal should be to make the job easy for your referer.

Different companies have different referral systems but generally referral systems operate one of two ways:

- Employees fill out a form about the candidate.
- Employees can send over a referral link.

You want the process to be easy for your referer, so it's important to **reduce the friction.** Don't ask "Are there openings in your company?"

Instead…

- Go to the company website and find the job opening that is the best fit for you.

- Then send a LinkedIn message or email containing the following to your referer:
  - Your resume.
    - Make sure your resume has the link to your LinkedIn profile
  - The link to the job opening you are most interested in.
  - A brief description of your experience and why you are a good fit for the position, written in the third person. Here is an example:

> *Great, thanks!*
>
> *I have attached my resume, a third-person introduction, and a position that would be a good fit for me. And I am more than happy to provide any additional information or materials you may need.*
>
> *[Name] is a highly skilled Data Scientist with 5+ years of experience in marketing and product development. He excels in using a/b testing, machine learning, and statistical modeling to drive informed business*

decisions. [Name]'s exceptional communication skills help him influence decision-makers and collaborate effectively with cross-functional teams of marketers, strategists, and engineers. He is equipped to handle any challenge with ease and expertise, using tools like SQL, Python, Spark, and R.

Link to position: [URL]

Best,
[Your Name]

By finding the exact position and providing this information, you can help make the process smooth and ensure a great referral.

🤔 **But what if you don't already have someone in your network that can give you a referral?**

▼ #2 Informational Interviews

There is a way to get referrals from people you don't know, and that way is to get to know them!

👉 Informational interviews are when you connect with people, and then **after building a relationship**, you can ask for a referral.

This sounds like a lot of work, but expanding your network has long-term benefits.

So, how do you go about doing this?

- Connect with people on LinkedIn and invite them for an informational interview. Here's a template:

   Hi [NAME],

   My name is [YOUR NAME] and I have dedicated my entire career to [FIELD]. I must say, I am really impressed by what [COMPANY] is doing.

   Your work and career trajectory have caught my attention and I am very interested in learning more about [WHAT YOU DO]. Since we are both based in [LOCATION], I would love to take you out for coffee or set up a call to pick your brain.

   Would you be free sometime this or next week? I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to chat with you and learn more about your experiences and

> *insights.*
>
> *Thank you for your time and consideration.*
>
> *Best regards,*
> *[Your First Name]*

- After 2-3 conversations (1~2 month), you may **then** bring up the topic of getting a referral or other connections.

▼ Tips for Informational Interviews

During information interviews, it's important to focus on the person you're speaking with, rather than yourself. Instead of asking for referrals or favors, show genuine interest in their experiences.

For instance, ask the person about **their career path**, including any differences they may have experienced between their current and previous companies. Also, inquire about what makes them particularly excited about their current role and the company they work for.

Additionally, it can be helpful to ask for **any advice they may have for you** in the industry. They may have valuable tips and insights to share that can help you navigate your own career path.

▼ 🧲 Action Items

Now that you have some strategies, it's time to get started landing interviews! Here are a few action items to help you with the process:

1. Stay organized. Creating a table to keep track of what companies you have applied to and who you are reaching out to can be very helpful.

   - Use our Interview Tracker to stay organized. You can make a copy of it by clicking the three dots in the top right corner and selecting "Duplicate".

🚦 Interview Tracker

Aa Company	🔗 Job Post	≣ Methods	📅 Application Date	≣ Follow Up	Result	Recruiter Call	Take-home	TPS
📄 Company A		referral	March 15, 2023	1/5 1/19	● Reject	● Not started	● Not started	● Not start...
Company B		referral		1/15 1/22	● Reject	● Not started	● Not started	● Not start...
Company C		referral			● Accept	● Fail	● Not started	● Not start...
Company E		contact hiring mana...			● Accept	● Pass	● Not started	● Fail
Company F		raw application			● Accept	● Pass	● Fail	● Not start...
Company G		raw application			● Accept	● Pass	● Pass	● Fail
Company H		referral			● Accept	● Pass	● Not started	● Pass
Company I		referral			● Accept	● Pass	● Pass	● Pass
Company J		referral			● Accept	● Pass	● Not started	● Pass
Company K		referral			● Accept	● Pass	● Fail	● Not start...
Company L		referral		1/19	● Reject	● Not started	● Not started	● Not start...
Company M		referral			● Accept	● Pass	● Fail	● Not start...

+ New

Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄   Calculate ⌄

2. Gather a list of job posts that are potentially a good fit for you.

- Leverage both our company list and LinkedIn.

3. Use multiple methods to land interviews.

- Submit **2 applications** (include cold messages to gatekeepers) per day → **10/week**

- Send **1 referral** or **informational interview request** per day → **5/week**

- Dedicate **1hr/week** to follow-ups.