Job Market White Paper:
Notes for Economics PhD Job Candidates

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[1] Comments and suggestions would be very much appreciated (sarah.a.jacobson@williams.edu). I am grateful for comments already received from Denvil Duncan, Andrew Hanson, Jon Rork, Menna Bizuneh, and Mike Sinkey.

1. Introduction and contributions

This paper aims to provide job market-related advice and information to current economics PhD candidates at non-top-tier schools. I focus on the mechanics of the process and answer questions that I and my cohort found ourselves asking throughout the process. I also do some meta-discussion of things that seem to make for a successful candidate coming out of this kind of school. Finally, in this newest version I've added a coda about what happens after the market.

The main contributions of this paper are to provide detailed advice, to focus that advice on the situation facing people coming out of non-top-tier schools, and to approach the topic from the perspective of a colleague.

This paper is not intended to replace other sources of advice, but merely to augment what you learn from them. I skip topics that are sufficiently covered in other written sources, but include lessons learned from verbal advice sessions with many faculty and from my own experience.

One reason I saw a need for this document is that most of the advice you receive will be from faculty and authors who came out of higher-ranked schools. The advice you get from the department will fight some of this bias, but the problem remains. My alma mater, for example, is a top-200-ranked economics department. This may be unfair (rankings lag actual achievement, etc.) but it's the reality. This has big implications for your job search strategy. Notably, your chances are slim when applying to institutions ranked near or above your school, and this includes most schools with PhD programs. Don't give up: you'll still probably find a good job. But you must let realistic expectations guide you throughout the process.

Since much of this document is about what I have learned, let me state my perspective. I am a 2010 Georgia State economics PhD with broad applied microeconomics interests (behavioral / experimental, environmental, development, and public). 2009-2010 was a bad job market year, with a lot of pent-up labor supply from the previous (terrible) year and reduced labor demand. Our cohort was large, and some of us looked like substitutes for each other. Most of us ended up being successful, and some of us were very successful. I was shocked and delighted by the good fortune of my outcome and my job market experience was exhausting but overall quite positive. As of this writing, I've been on the job as an assistant professor for a year (and still loving it), and have participated a bit on the employer-side of both an economics search and a non-economics search.

The rest of the document will go into details, but here are a few high-level pieces of advice.

First, the biggest factor in job market success is the quality of your work: your research, and (for some jobs) policy work, teaching, etc. The goal of your job search process is to remove barriers between you and the best job that your work can earn you. You will lose 4-6 months of work to the job search process. But never forget that employers are looking to hire someone based on their work, not their ability to do a job search, and never mistake the job search for real work.

This document will only advise you on the job search process—I take it as given that you know your business when it comes to your work, though I'll address that briefly in Section 2.

Second, faculty will help you get a job. Ask for their help, and help them help you. They'll usually oblige happily. It's part of their job. Your advisor should be your main booster (so choose your advisor carefully). This also pertains to other members of your committee, other faculty you know at GSU, and other faculty you know at other institutions. The more friendly you've gotten with faculty here and elsewhere, the more help you will get. Even faculty you don't know well may know something about you and may help you unexpectedly. Did you know faculty talk about you behind your back? This is good for you (if you've been acquitting yourself well) because it means more faculty know who you are and what you're doing.

Third, you'll be tempted to do what I call "reading tea leaves." By this I mean: making guesses about the state of the world from very noisy signals. Try to avoid doing this, because it will make you crazy. I'll point out some forms of this that seem particularly damaging, but examples include scouring online rumor boards and reading between the lines of words from search committees (from emails, interviews, etc.). Reading tea leaves is a waste of time and is almost certainly utility-decreasing.

Fourth, there are many stochastic elements and things outside your control. A search committee or department may have an unadvertised preference for a certain kind of candidate, a job may be "wired" to another candidate, you may have connections you don't know about or lack connections that would help, a job's funding may fall through, etc. Your chances are never exactly 0 or 1. I tried to think about each job's prospects as being the result of a random number generator or a die roll. Don't bank on specific jobs, and don't take negative outcomes personally.

Fifth, be gracious and considerate to faculty, staff, other GSU candidates, candidates from other schools, faculty and staff from potential employers, and so on. The process is time-consuming and stressful for everyone. Make other people's lives more pleasant by being nice. Also, the people you meet will talk about you, and you'd rather have them say nice things. Finally, it's trite but true that this is a repeated game. You may be on the market again in a few years (people often are). Even if you're not, this is a great time to make friends and meet future collaborators.

2. Are you ready? What you should have before entering the market.

The most important indication that you're ready to go on the market is that you have support and buy-in from your advisor. You should have a relationship with your advisor such that each of you is honest with and trusts the other. If you have a good advisor, she knows more than you do about whether you're marketable right now. Other faculty may also be able to weigh in on your preparedness. The rest of your committee should at least know something about your job market paper. The department's job market advisor will also know about you. Other faculty who know

you (e.g. those in your field) may also have advice. Most faculty will defer to your advisor's opinion, of course, and rightly so.

If your opinion about your readiness differs from that of your advisor and other faculty, reconsider *your* opinion. Ask more people for advice. Your advisor might not stop you from going on the market if she thinks you're not ready, but her buy-in will make your life easier.

The main things that you and your advisors will consider are: whether your dissertation is nearly done and whether your job market paper is ready.

"School"-wise, you will have completed your coursework, exams, and proposal defense some time ago, so all that remains will be your dissertation. Your dissertation should be basically done before your job market adventure starts. That's because if you are successful on the market, you won't have much time to work on your dissertation between the time you start the job market and the time you defend your dissertation, particularly if you plan to graduate in May.

One chapter from your dissertation will be your job market paper (a.k.a. "JMP"). It must be a standalone piece, and it must be well-written and have solid content. It's OK for it to have already been published—that demonstrates market value—but it also means it's not new work, so you'll need to consider that. Most people send their job market paper out for publication in their first year on the job. It can be co-authored with your advisor, but it must be demonstrable that you are the major contributor. Your advisor must make this clear in her letter as well. I used a co-authored paper and got no questions about the co-authoring, presumably because it was clearly my baby. If you have multiple possible job market papers, you can use two papers for two different types of jobs, as long as both are good. Everyone I know who used two job market papers did well with that strategy (including me). This may be a good strategy if you're broad (to appeal to two different markets with two kinds of papers), but it's hard to have two papers at the level of quality and discussability that's required.

You will be talking about your job market paper(s) a lot, so you must be confident in the economics contained therein. This is how you prove to employers that your fundamentals are strong. Again, do not confuse the job search for your real work.

The dissertation and the job market paper(s) are essential, and your advisor(s) support of your job market effort can be seen as either an indicator of your readiness or a requirement to enter the market. But these conditions are the minimum. A borderline candidate from a non-top school can be very easily overlooked in a competitive job market.

Your readiness will determine whether you get a job this year, and how good your first job is. Your first job may not be your last job, and your accomplishments in your first job may help you be upwardly mobile in the future. On the other hand, some "less good" jobs are hard to escape and are considered dead ends for that reason. If a job looks weak on your CV, and if at that job

you have no chance to do research, it may be hard to market yourself in the future. In other words, careers have some path-dependence, so you want as strong a starting point as you can get.

If you barely meet the market readiness bar, consider waiting a year. Most people go on the market in their fifth year. Common wisdom is that there is no penalty for going out a year "late" (in your sixth year). The issue is often funding. Where I got my degree, the department provided guaranteed funding for the first five years, and generally no funding for a sixth year. Talk to your advisor—she may be able to fund you directly. Some people get an outside job, e.g. teaching classes at another school, to fund later years. I've seen people have good success with this strategy, but on the other hand it does make it harder to finish.

What if you go on the market and (for whatever reason) don't find a job that works for you? You will go on the market again next year, hopefully with a year of funding from your advisor. It's not clear whether you are penalized for failing on your first try. However, the process is painful, so you should try to avoid this outcome.

Going on the market a year early (in your fourth year) does not seem like a good idea to me. Common wisdom is that there is no premium for going out early (i.e. it doesn't per se make you look like a better catch). If you're ready in your fourth year, you're probably only marginally ready. Why not stay another year and finish another paper or two, teach a class, or do an internship? You'll end up with a better chance at a better job. Your family may be champing at the bit for you to finish and get a real job. Help them understand that you'd be trading off one year in the program for a much better future career path—is your discount rate really so extreme?

Differentiating Factors

These factors can make all the difference in getting you a good job. Your institution is a noisy signal of our quality, so the more you can do to boost your signal above the noise, the better off you are. Most jobs receive hundreds of applications. You need to stand out.

- Having a publication or two in peer-reviewed journals. This is the biggest thing. If you have no pubs, try to have one or two "revise and resubmit" or at least "under review." This means you have to plan ahead. The review process can take many months (or a couple of years for the whole iterative process). Try to send a paper or two out (probably with your advisor) in your third year if possible, and/or in your fourth year.
- Having a grant, even if it's an internal (your school) grant. This is very attractive to most employers. An external (NSF, Russell Sage, NIH, EPA, etc.) grant or fellowship is the best because it shows that you are "entrepreneurial" and can bring money in.
- Really strong letters of reference. You will have three or four letter-writers, and you want all letters to be very strong. Your writers must know you well and think highly of you. There may be a tradeoff between the reputation of the letter-writer and the letter's effusiveness. Both are important! Sometimes a revered senior faculty member will be reserved in your letter (and hands-off in your job market process). Remember, you won't

see your letters. If someone doesn't think she can recommend you she'll probably refuse to write the letter (one hopes), but you should worry about the borderline case where she agrees but writes a modestly complimentary letter. I do not exaggerate when I say that modest praise can really hurt you. "She's really nice, and so hardworking!" does not make search committees eager to meet a candidate. So choose letter-writers carefully.

- Having lots of friends. Your committee and faculty friends will make calls and send emails to places you're seeking jobs. (If you know people at these institutions, you'll contact them yourself, too!) The importance of these contacts cannot be overstated: this kind of call may move your CV from the "ignore" stack into the "look again" stack. Once you have a list of jobs you're applying to, run that list by your advisor and faculty friends. Some of these contacts will happen without your knowledge, so the better-known you are in your department, the better your chances. If your application to School X runs across the desk of someone who knows Professor Y at GSU, he will call Professor Y and ask what he knows about you. You never know who'll be talking about you.
- Having taught a class. This can make a huge difference for teaching schools and liberal arts colleges but probably not much of a difference for research schools, and obviously no difference for non-academic jobs. Having good teaching evaluations is great, but mediocre or even poor teaching evaluations will work (since you'll probably improve). Note that teaching eats up a lot of time, so it may push your PhD completion schedule back. Also note: rates of teaching vary across schools, but in my department only about 25% of econ PhDs taught before graduation. If you haven't taught and that's normal for your department, you can explain that norm if you're asked in an interview.
- Having TA'd, with student evaluations of your performance. You must be pretty active in the course (give a lecture or two, have office hours, hold review sessions, handle quizzes, etc.) to get evaluated. Faculty for whom you TA should be amenable to letting you post an evaluation form, and may even give students extra credit to evaluate you.
- If you're interested in policy jobs, policy experience (work with a policy center, an internship at a government agency, etc.) can be very attractive. You may get publications (probably non-peer-reviewed) from this kind of work, too—peer-reviewed is always better, but these papers sometimes turn into peer-reviewed publications later.
- Having a set date for your dissertation defense, in consultation with your committee. This is a signal that you're serious about finishing on time. It's cheap talk because you could push it back, but you should still consider it a deadline. Decide on the date before your letters are written; if your advisor mentions it in her letter, it's better than cheap talk.
- Having projects in your pipeline. Have working papers and works in progress on your CV, but only put a few and make sure these are serious projects that are going forward. Also have ideas in your head of areas you want to do future work in. You need to be able to talk intelligently about "what's next" in both specific (near-term) and general (long-term) terms. This is a necessary condition for any job that includes research.

- Having made conference presentations. Start as early as you can. Your paper need not be perfect when you present it. This gets you feedback, gets you out into the academic world, lets you meet people, and provides evidence that you're an active researcher.

As you can see, the meat of it comes from the work you've been doing for years. So if I were to distill advice for early years of PhD study:

- Pick a good advisor who will work closely with you. If your chair is a big-name researcher, she might not be a hands-on advisor; in this case, you may want a committee member who will be more engaged.
- Start doing research early, both with your advisor and on your own. From your third year on (your second, if you can manage it), you should have papers that are coming together.
- Send out papers for publication (co-authored or alone).
- Go to conferences and workshops to present your work. (If it's convenient, go just to attend sessions even if you can't present.) The department has funding to reimburse up to two trips for conference presentations. At these events, go to the cocktail parties and schmooze. Field-specific workshops are fantastic opportunities to meet people and be seen (examples: Camp Resources for environmental, IFREE for experimental).
- Sign up for your discipline's listserv or email list (examples: resecon for environmental, esa-announce for experimental).
- Apply for research grants and doctoral fellowships. Do this as early as you can, since many have long lead times.
- Select a dissertation committee of people who are great economists and tough questioners. It helps if they like you and are supportive. Keep them constantly apprised of your plans; if someone asks them questions about you, they should be able to answer.
- Have a portfolio of work, including projects at various stages of completion.
- Have a vision of where you want to end up, both in terms of type of job (research, policy, teaching) and area of focus. (Of course, you may have to be flexible…)
- If you want to teach: be a teaching assistant and ask the instructor to let you be very active and to let you give a TA evaluation.
- If you want to teach: try to teach your own course. Your department may require you to go through a process: a teaching seminar, some kind of test or evaluation. The process itself may be useful to you.
- Be well-known in the department and get to know faculty. Attend seminars and brown-bag presentations, and give presentations. Do well in your classes. Be a good research assistant (your advisor will complain to other faculty if you are not good, and brag if you are good). Attend social functions like the annual picnic and regular happy hours.
- Meet visiting faculty and seminar presenters—most such visitors have a slot in their schedules specifically to meet with students. This gets you feedback from fresh sources and helps you get to know people outside your department. Also, you will meet some of

these people again, and they will probably be nice to you if you mention the meeting (even if they don't remember you).

- Learn about the interests and specialties of the members of your department's faculty. Someone may be able to give you specialized help even if you don't know them well. For example, if you want to teach at a Christian school, if you know which faculty member is active in the Association of Christian Economists you can ask him for advice.
- Make friends with your department's staff, particularly the person who coordinates sending out letters. My school's admin (the fabulous Bess Blyler) was a lifesaver. You should always be nice to this person, say "please" and "thank you," and do everything he/she asks.
- Make a good CV early on and keep it updated.
- Make sure that your page on the department's grad student website is updated with your information. Most schools let you post a picture, CV, a link to a website, and sometimes a bio. (Most schools also arrange photo sessions, so take advantage of that.) Observe deadlines and recommendations from the people maintaining this website.
- Make a website. This is easy in Google Sites; alternatively, your school probably offers you free web space. Don't post much personal information. Do post your job market materials. Ask your advisor to link to you. The more links to you, the more likely you'll come up on a Google search (which employers may check). You may want a profile on professional networking sites like LinkedIn. Social networking sites can be a problem: purge silliness from your FaceBook (etc.) sites and clamp down the privacy controls.

There's another factor I want to mention for international students. An unfortunate feature of the market is that accented English, although pleasant to many people's ears, may not resonate well with some interviewers. If you're not a native speaker, make sure your English is really good. Even if your English is really good, be aware that a strong accent may make people unfairly *think* your English is bad. If this may be an issue for you, you may want to try to work on it.

3. Literature review and other resources

You have many resources for the job market. I include a brief bibliography at the end of this document. I found there to be an excess of resources so that it was difficult to know what to read. After my (admittedly scattershot) examination of the literature, this is what I think.

First, your primary source of information should be your faculty advisors and the department's job market coordinator. These people know a lot and it's their job to help you. Take advantage of them. Take notes during meetings with them. Start asking for advice early. Also ask advice from any other faculty member who will talk to you—most are quite interested in helping, and

this is particularly true for junior faculty because they went through the process recently. Keep in mind your faculty members' perspectives—some of them know you very well, some less so; some of them know the market very well, and some less so. Get many perspectives.

Next, read and re-read "A Guide (and Advice) for Economists on the U.S. Junior Academic Job Market" (Cawley, 2009). It is available on the AEA website (the latest should be linked here: http://www.aeaweb.org/joe/). He publishes a new version occasionally. This document contains a wealth of information about the process, along with statistics that are (mostly) reassuring. This was my main written guide for the process. There is also a very helpful glossary at the end of his paper.

The AEA Resources for Economists website (http://aea-web.org/RFE/showCat.php?cat_id=13) links to a few papers that you may find interesting. For example, there's an annual study of the results of the economic job market (including salaries) produced by University of Arkansas ("Survey of the Labor Market for New Ph.D. Hires in Economics 2010-11," Deck et al. 2010). "The Job Market for New Economists: A Market Design Perspective" (Coles et al., 2009) covers the process in general and gives a better treatment of signaling than I've seen elsewhere.

Beyond that, I suggest you limit the time you spend reading the books and papers. Doing so would probably not improve your search much, and your time may be better spent honing your job market paper or picking faculty brains. Remember, the job search is not your real work!

If you feel like a broader information base would serve you well, consider books like the following. Some titles address the academic job search process from a broad perspective (e.g. *The Academic Job Search Handbook*, Vick and Furlong 2008), but I didn't think they added much beyond what was in Cawley. Some other books may be interesting if you have particular concerns. For example, many books address topics for women in academia (see sources suggested by Cawley). There are books about how to interview (e.g. *Job Interviews for Dummies*, Kennedy 2000), but I'm not sure those say anything you couldn't figure out yourself.

The one category I do recommend is professional development books and papers about academia in general or economics specifically. These will pay dividends throughout your professional life. For example, there are books about how to write as an academic (e.g. *How to Write a Lot*, Silvia, 2007) and how to write in economics (e.g. McCloskey's *Economical Writing*, 1999). There are also papers and books on how to be a well-functioning professional economist, including some by McCloskey and some by Hamermesh (e.g. "A Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette", 1992, which I highly recommend). Browsing *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is another good habit to get into if you're interested in the ivory tower.

On that note, you'll want to sound like you're following the latest research in your field, and the best way to do that is to actually follow the latest research in your field. A great way to do this is to subscribe to working paper announcements; I love NBER working paper updates, and there are a lot more working paper series to choose from. I also subscribe to a "Table of Contents"

email for the top general-interest journals and the top journals in my fields and I scan it to find new work I should be reading. These are also good long term habits, not just for job search.

I strongly advise against spending time on online job rumor boards (but, like me, you may find it impossible to follow this advice). This is my opinion. Others argue that they can be good for a laugh, but I think you'll more often be made anxious and unhappy by looking at them. The notorious www.econjobrumors.com is full of filth and nonsense, and it seems to me that most of what's on there is information-less babble and half the rest is wrong (either deliberately or not). Most people posting seem to be truly unpleasant people from top-20 schools, and those are people you probably can safely ignore. There is an associated Wiki site where call, flyout, and offer information is posted (http://bluwiki.com/go/Econjobmarket). The information posted there seems to be correct but there is tremendous underreporting. I'm ambivalent as to whether I would advise posting your information on this site, but I do advise against spending much time reading it.

A handy web resource is the NBER candidates page (http://www.nber.org/candidates/). This can help you prepare your packet because you can look at other candidates' materials. Don't get depressed about all the Harvard and MIT students, though. They're not your competition.

You'll also want institutional ranking sources. The research ranking of the economics department is what matters. This is not the same as the overall school rank (e.g. from *US News and World Reports*). The AEA links to some rankings from papers and web resources from this page: http://www.aeaweb.org/gradstudents/Rankings.php. One of the most-referred-to rankings is Kalaitzidakis, Stengos, and Mamuneas, 2003; since it's so common, it's worth looking at. Take all rankings with a grain of salt because the calculation of rankings is controversial. However, these should give you ballpark ideas about the institutions you're applying to. Liberal arts schools are often not in research rankings, so for liberal arts rankings you do use *US News and World Reports*. Things get tricky when you're looking at non-economics departments (e.g., policy schools and interdisciplinary departments); they usually won't be ranked at all, and the rank of their university's economics department does not apply to them.

4. Overview of time line and process

You have been told that you won't get much work done while on the market. You may be skeptical, but it's true. I got almost no research done from mid-October until the beginning of March. So bear this in mind as you make your plans.

Say that you're going on the market in 2011-2012. Your timeline will look something like the timeline I give below. Note that other departments may schedule things like practice talks and mock interviews slightly differently, and certainly details about defense and graduation will probably differ. I'm giving the timeline as experienced at Georgia State.

- Early in 2011 – make sure that your dissertation committee knows of your plans. Settle on a job market paper and have a plausible draft some time in spring.
- Before August 2011 – recruit 3 or 4 letter-writers. Most jobs only require three, but some require four. They need at least six weeks' notice before your letter deadline.
- August 2011 – have a really good draft of your job market paper
- August 2011 – start checking JOE
- Starting August 2011 and ongoing – compile list of jobs, with attention to deadlines. Tell your letter-writers the date by which they must get letters to your admin (this will be at least two weeks before your earliest application deadline).
- September and October 2011 – prepare job market materials
- September through November 2011 – buy interview clothing and supplies (see Section 5)
- October 2011 (or some time before your first application deadlines) – ask the admin whether your reference letters have arrived; politely bug letter-writers who are behind
- End of October 2011 – first application deadlines (probably—but they may be earlier!)
- October and November 2011 – practice job market talk (arranged by the department)
- November and December 2011 – mock interviews (arranged by the department)
- End of November 2011 – get all of your applications out by Thanksgiving, even if they have later deadlines. In the US academic market, search committees meet in or before the first week of December to discuss candidates. Continue to look for and apply to new job postings (mostly non-academic and non-US) after this.
- November and December 2011 – receive calls for interviews at ASSA. Some phone interviews will take place now.
- Early January 2012 – ASSA, at which you will have most of your first-round interviews
- January and February 2012 – most of your flyouts from ASSA interviews
- Through March 2012 – calls from non-ASSA-interviewing institutions
- March through April 2012 – the Scramble (basically, an accelerated job market process for employers and candidates who did not find matches in the main job market)
- March through early April 2012 – order regalia, defend dissertation, make revisions, and send it to your school's authority if you plan to graduate in Spring. You'll electronically deposit your dissertation in the weeks before commencement. There are deadlines linked to your commencement date, so check with your school.
- May 2012 – commencement
- May-August 2012 – move to your new home
- July or August or September 2012 – start your new job. It may start in May-June if you teach in summer; if it's non-US or non-academic it may be earlier or later.

There is some variance in the timing. European markets and post-doctoral positions may post and clear at different times, although some try to align themselves with the US job market schedule. European jobs, in my experience, tend to be late, with deadlines in January and later. Private and government positions may have a more continuous year-round recruitment process.

There's yet another twist for F1 students. There are specific rules about applying for Optional Practical Training that may affect the timing of your dissertation defense, so you may need to be strategic in scheduling your defense. Learn about this in advance and plan accordingly.

If you're not an F1 student, how do you decide whether to graduate in spring or summer? At my department, there were subtle details relating to graduate stipend, enrollment, summer tuition and fees, and commencement—other schools may have similar but idiosyncratic features. In our case, spring graduates would not get paid after May, but summer graduates had to enroll (and pay tuition and fees) in summer, and then there was the issue that summer commencement did not include PhD students.

Research schools and many other institutions have a process that goes something like this:

- Post job ad in fall. Some departments may not post an ad until they get funding approval; others post ads with a disclaimer that the job will only exist if they get funding.
- Start reviewing applications as a they trickle in or en masse the week after Thanksgiving (this is why you want to send applications by Thanksgiving even if no deadline is noted)
- Make calls through the end of December
- Have first-round interviews at ASSA
- Meet to decide on flyout invitations. This usually happens after they return to campus, and may have to be run by the faculty, the dean, or the provost.
- Make calls for flyouts. This can happen immediately after ASSA, or as late as mid-February because some schools move slowly. (A friend of mine got a flyout call in April!)
- Have flyouts over two to four weeks (so flyouts are mostly complete in February).
- Meet to decide on offers. They may need to run this by the department faculty, the dean, or the provost before making the offer.
- Make offer within a few days of last flyout. The other candidates who do not receive the offer usually hear nothing at this point.
- First round offer recipient usually gets up to a week or two to decide.
- If s/he rejects, the school may call their "number two" candidate to make an offer. Or they may decide no-one else in their first flyout batch was good enough, and call for another round of flyouts. Or they may decide none of the other candidates was good enough, in which case they enter the Scramble or simply do not hire this year.

Variants in the institution's process include the following:

- European schools may post jobs late, have later deadlines, and have interview schedules that are later and briefer (e.g. all candidates conduct brief on-site interviews in one day).
- Some institutions do not have first-round interviews and simply fly out candidates based on their applications. This includes some European schools, some non-economics departments (e.g. policy schools), and schools with smaller budgets.

- Some institutions may have phone interviews instead of either first-round ASSA interviews or second-round flyouts. Alternatively, phone interviews may be an additional round that happens before, in the middle of, or after the first and second rounds.
- Jobs can get cancelled (or sometimes un-cancelled) at any point in the process, usually because of funding.

Institutions also send each other packets of their grad students' materials; for example, my school may have sent a stack of CV's from all of our candidates out to some schools that posted jobs. The idea is that institutions looking to hire can start by digging through these broadcast materials to pick out appealing candidates. Even if your school does this mailing, it's not clear to me how many institutions really look at these mass packets, so I would essentially disregard this as an element of your job search process. (Unless your department's admin asks you to submit materials for this mailing, in which case you should certainly comply.)

5. Stuff to get: A shopping list of job market paraphernalia

Buy these by December or earlier, because you don't want to scramble at the last minute.

You need one or two good suits. The ASSA conference will require four complete days, and you may have back-to-back flyouts, so you want four different outfits. I liked having suits of two different colors and tops of four very different colors so that at ASSA it didn't look like I was wearing the same thing (and on each flyout I could use one suit and wear a different-color top on each day). A male candidate told me that he did fine with one jacket, two pairs of pants, and four shirts (plus ties). Your clothing should be professional-looking and somewhat conservative, but there's no need to be either stuffy and bland on the one hand, or excessively stylish on the other. You can express some taste. Above all, get something you're comfortable in.

You need at least one fantastic pair of shoes. They must look professional and be very comfortable. You will do a lot of walking (and maybe some running) in these shoes. If you're not used to dressing up, picking good shoes is an important investment of time, attention, and money.

You need a good and professional-looking winter coat. You also may as well build up a wardrobe of "business casual" clothes—e.g., slacks, button-down shirts, and appropriate shoes—if you don't have them already. They may be useful on flyouts.

A briefcase or professional-looking satchel is essential. A backpack looks bad, but you may be able to get away with a nice laptop bag. You want one that is easy to carry (I liked a satchel with a shoulder-strap), is an easy airplane carry-on, and can hold everything you need (including your laptop). Ladies, you also need a purse, of course.

You need a good suitcase that will fit in the overhead compartment of a plane, because you won't want to check it. It should come with a suiter (but you can use the garment bag that came with your suit). Consider getting a travel steamer. Get a toiletry bag, travel-sized toiletries, travel alarm clock, and other travel necessities.

Get business cards. Your department may print them for you either for free or for a small fee. Don't get too many: I probably gave out 10 or fewer. You may want a business card case, too.

Order official graduate transcripts. Do this in advance—probably August, if you have deadlines in September. You may want to do a rough count of how many places request official paper transcripts with the application—I ended up needing 6. You'll break one open to scan it to send electronically with a lot of applications. You may have to pay for them (my school only gave 5 free transcripts per student through your entire tenure). Find your official undergraduate transcripts, too, and any other transcripts that are relevant.

Get a portfolio, organizer, or planner. It will help manage your complicated schedule and it also looks nice. Consider getting a smart phone. I didn't have one, and while the world did not end, I felt hampered at not being able to check my email and do web stuff while on the go.

Get mailing supplies. Some schools pay for mailing, printing, and copying; mine did not. You may want to do your printing and copying at a copy center. If you do it at home, you need a printer that does double-sided printing (most can if you fight with them) and a boatload of blank paper. Get manila envelopes—I did fine with 9x12, but you can get the next size up to be safe. Get labels you can print on (this is where printing at home is very handy). I used big labels for the "to" and small labels for the "from" address. Writing addresses by hand is laborious and looks less pretty, but I suspect it doesn't matter too much.

If you're applying internationally, get a passport, or renew your passport if it's nearing expiration. It takes some time, so look into it early.

If you like reading, get some juicy, trashy novels for ASSA and your flyouts—you'll need the distraction! (Print up some papers to read, too, but you may have a hard time concentrating.)

Finally, this is not a shopping list item, but: try to be well-rested, healthy, and in reasonably good physical shape before you go on the market. The job search process is rough on the body. I do not exaggerate when I tell you that there's a good chance you'll gain weight (and your complexion may suffer, too!) because of stress, schedule, and the way that meals are incorporated into interviews. (So make sure your suits are not too tight-fitting!)

6. Documents you will need

There are documents you need to include in your application packet, and then there are data management tools that you will use to keep your head straight through the job market process.

Documents you need for your packet

For all of these documents, make sure they look neat, tidy, and uniform. Use standard fonts (e.g., Times New Roman) and good font sizes and margins (e.g., 12 point, 1" on all sides). No typos. You'll send them as pdf's, but Microsoft programs now easily output pdf's so this is easy.

Look at examples of these documents to get ideas, although you must not copy text. Junior faculty and friends from previous cohorts are often willing to share. Web searching (or going through the NBER candidate page) is another good way to find examples. Caveat emptor applies to all example documents: not every document you'll read will be of the highest quality.

Have faculty and friends review your documents. In my year, my department's Grad Student Association ran a pizza lunch session in which faculty bounced from candidate to candidate, poring over packet materials and giving feedback. This is a very efficient way to get a lot of useful advice at low cost to faculty, so if your department has not arranged such a thing you may want to take the reins yourself to get one set up.

Each institution posting a job will specify what materials you should send them—therefore, each "packet" (which may be paper, email attachments, or a website upload) will be slightly different. A few jobs request idiosyncratic items, but nearly all jobs ask for some subset of the following:

- Curriculum vitae. You should have been updating a CV since you started the program. Model it on CV's you like from advanced graduate students and junior faculty (CV's of senior faculty are arranged differently). Get feedback from your advisor and the job market coordinator. Your CV should use the same font and margins as the rest of your materials. There is no length limit. It's handy to put your dissertation abstracts (and/or other recent research abstracts) at the end of your CV. If you taught or TA'd, you might put your overall rating from students in parentheses after each course. Indicate your citizenship. Use your cell phone number and either your home or school mailing address. Some people use multiple CVs for different job types with items listed in different orders. When considering whether to add something to your CV, remember that in an interview you may get asked a question about anything you put on there—so be careful with half-baked research ideas (a good rule: if you don't have results, don't put it on there), random clubs, claims of software proficiency, etc.
- Job market paper(s). Focus on a strong abstract, introduction, and conclusion. Make sure it looks nice. Use normal fonts, font sizes, and margins. Pay attention to things like table formatting. Many search committee members will read the abstract, skim the introduction and conclusion, and flip through the rest of the paper. Make sure that charts and graphs look fine if printed in black ink (rather than color). Tables and figures can be

either at the end of the document or placed throughout. As discussed above, you may have two job market papers.

- Other papers. If you have papers that are good enough to send as additional samples of your work, you can send them. If they are published, send the journal-formatted version.
- Research statement. Some places require a one-page research statement and a handful require a longer statement, so you may end up with several versions. In this document, you'll say what your fields of interest are, what your primary research programs are, what your research has been to date, and what's next. This is a birds-eye view of you as a research creature. If you are broad, try to emphasize a theme or themes in your work, but be honest. For a few jobs, this may be more like a detailed proposal of what you want to do for the next few years, with good structure, citations, and a bibliography.
- Teaching statement / philosophy. This should probably be a page long. This document talks about your teaching experience and how you will approach teaching. If you're feeling cute, you can put a quote about teaching or a student comment at the document's top. There's a lot of variety in teaching statements, and many you find on the web are not good. The American Chemical Society (2000) gives great advice on how to do a well-thought-out teaching philosophy; this is a good exercise to go through if you are interested in teaching, but you'll have to cut it drastically to create a one-page version.
- Teaching evaluations (if applicable). Include numerical ratings (and comparisons to other course sections and the department overall, if possible), but exclude student comments.
- Scanned graduate and undergraduate transcripts. You can scan them at school if you don't have a scanner at home. If your social security number appears on your transcripts, edit the image to block it out.
- Cover letters. There is a lot of debate about how important a cover letter is. What's probably true is that some places read your cover letter carefully and others toss it aside. Because of the former, it's worth being careful in both the writing of your cover letter in general and the tailoring of your cover letter to different kinds of jobs. Most people use either one master cover letter or several semi-master cover letters for different job types (e.g. research, liberal arts, private, government). You'll mail merge this with address information from job spreadsheets, and then after merging you can do further customizing as you wish. The letter should be well-written and in a professional tone. It should say who you are, what you do, and what your major accomplishments are so far. It should also give logistic information (e.g. I'll be at this or that conference). I am leery of a long letter so I was strict in keeping to one page; opinions may vary on this. Make an electronic signature to put on letters you're emailing (sign a piece of paper and scan it).

One question you may have is: how much will I customize my packet materials? You'll apply to a large number of jobs, and you'll have to send the right materials to the right jobs by the right deadline, so you'll already be doing some juggling. You'll also need to have some customizing in your cover letter, even if it's just the use of a mail merge. Some people go further, with entirely different cover letters or even CVs for different jobs or job types. There is a tradeoff; a

more customized application may stand out more, but customization also leaves a lot of opportunities for error. (Errors turn out to be a source of amusement to search committees; at my College, people get a good chuckle over—and then discard—the letters that say how much the applicant would love to teach at our University.)

Data management tools:

You will be dealing with a massive amount of information. To make the process easier, you should get a data management infrastructure laid out early on. You'll need to organize materials you're sending out (e.g., cover letters) and materials you're collecting (e.g., job ads and application forms). Everyone will have their own method, but here's what worked for me.

I kept a folder in my computer called "Job Search." Within this folder, I have these folders:

- Advertisements – ads downloaded from emails and other sources
- App forms and other materials – application forms, blank and completed, and instructions, job descriptions, etc. that go with them
- Bess spreadsheets – spreadsheets I sent to my admin so she could send my reference letters
- Cover letters – I did my applications in waves (one wave per week), so I had a folder for each wave's merged and completed cover letters
- Flyouts – within this folder, I made a folder for each institution to which I did a flyout
- JOE – downloads from the JOEs (both spreadsheets and the pdf text listings). These were handy to have locally so I could refer back to them.
- Packet drafts – the files I put together at various stages for my job market packet
- Packet final – the pdf's of all materials I sent out with applications

As a counter-example, a colleague made a folder for each job. All job folders started out in one place (say, a master folder called "Applied"). When he got an interview call he moved that job's folder to a folder called "Interviews". When he got a flyout call he moved that job's folder to a folder called "Flyouts".

You need some way to keep track of the list of jobs you're applying to. A spreadsheet is the obvious choice. You'll be reviewing hundreds of job listings from multiple sources, figuring out which jobs to apply to (probably 80-200 jobs), and organizing particulars about those jobs. You must note the deadline for each, what each needs in its application, and how the application is to be submitted. Attention to these details is time-consuming but is respectful and appropriate.

You'll also need to send your admin information about where to send your reference letters. Jobs vary in how they want to receive letters. Some jobs don't want them sent right away (these will get reference information from your CV or request letters later if they're interested in you). Of the jobs that want letters sent right away, most will be done by your admin (except some

online apps—see below). If your admin sends you a template for the letter-destination information, use that template, period.

My main data management tool was a master Excel spreadsheet that contained all of the information I needed and from which I took information for my admin and my mail merges. My spreadsheet included tabs like the following:

- "Apply" – the most important tab – jobs I had applied to or was going to apply to. The structure started from JOE Excel downloads, but not all of that information was correct. I added columns items as I found I needed them. I added logistical things that would help me be organized (deadlines, when I planned to send it, what materials to send, how it should be sent, etc.). I had columns noting whether I got an application confirmation, an interview request, or a rejection. I had a column called "Like" where I ranked how much I liked the job. I used a column called "APP" to show how certain I was that I should apply to this job. I used color coding to indicate status: applied or still need to apply, interview request, rejection, etc. The most important columns were printable.
- "No-apply" – the jobs I looked at and did not apply to. Usually jobs went into "Apply" and I put them into the "No-apply" folder if I later learned it was not worth applying. By keeping them I could avoid re-examining jobs I'd already decided to skip.
- "Mmerge" tabs – I pasted info into a sheet for each batch of my cover letter mail merges
- "Bess" tabs – formatted the way my admin needed for her reference letter mail merge, and content came from the "Apply" tab and the JOE Excel downloads
- "Summary info" – a set of calculations based on info in my "Apply" spreadsheet, so that I could say unuseful things like, "I'm 67.2% done with my applications!" Also useful things like, "53 require mailing so I'd better get the big pack of envelopes."
- "Interviews" – here I put the standardized set of information I needed for each interview. This ensured I would ask all of the important questions when someone called for an interview. I had columns with information about the interview (e.g. where and when it was, phone number, who would be there) and about the job. I noted the job's geographic location and had a column for me and one for my husband to rate our preferences for the location. I also rated how much I liked the job, independent of the location.
- "ASSA schedule" – my schedule for the four days of ASSA, in 15-minute intervals, with info on where I needed to be for each interview.
- "ASSA no-interview" – this may sound odd, but there may be ASSA interview offers you are unable to take. This is to keep track of those non-interviews.

In addition, for every job I interviewed with, I did a fair amount of research and typed up (in Word) a page of notes to bring to each interview. I used this to study up before going in and to have questions and comments on hand in case I forgot anything. This included notes about the school and department, information about the people attending the interview, free-form notes, and a list of questions I wanted to ask. These sheets were lifesaving during ASSA.

I had a working notes document for bits and pieces of information, Perhaps the most useful thing I did here was keep information I had entered into applications and may need again. For example, once you've looked up your information on previous jobs (dates of employment, duties, salary, address, manager), you may as well keep it somewhere handy.

I had an "Interview Prep Notes" document that I used to list questions likely to be asked in an interview, and any research I had to do on them. This was mostly useful to record thoughts about classes I'd like to teach (structure, textbooks, etc.).

7. How to choose where to apply

Before you look

The first thing you have to do, before you start looking at jobs, is think about the kind of jobs available to you. What kind of job do you want? What kind of job are you reasonably qualified for? The main job types are: research school, teaching school, liberal arts school, private industry / consulting, private research, and government. Talk to people with various experience to try to figure out where you might be a good fit. Have preferences but be realistic. Don't have your heart set on a PhD granting institution; if that's where you want to work, do apply, but remember that your chances are slim. Most of us will apply to several kinds of jobs.

The rule my advisors gave me is that I should apply to every job that would be better than unemployment. I mostly agree. However, there are costs to applying to jobs. I started with a very large list of jobs and did several rounds of cutting, and was able to cut out my least preferred jobs (consulting jobs, locations I hated, and schools with teaching loads worse than 3/3) and still have a pool large enough that I was confident that I'd find a job. Advisors will help you with this narrowing process. But it truly does not hurt (much) to apply to one more job.

Of course, this creates a terrible equilibrium. If every job seeker sends out 100-200 applications, many jobs—even crappy jobs—will receive hundreds of applications. If you really would never, ever, ever take a particular job, don't apply. But it's the nature of the game to apply broadly so you have to be part of the problem, to some extent.

This will require you to think seriously about your location preferences. If you are tightly geographically constrained, your search will be very difficult. Sit down with your family and decide what's workable. Are you willing to go to other countries? If so, which ones? Are there regions you simply could not stand? Your family must understand how little control you have over the location of your first job. If their (or your) location preferences are very limiting, realize that you will probably trade off job quality for location at a tremendous rate.

Think also about your life in the long term. Your first job is not your last job. But some jobs will boost your mobility by making you more marketable, and other jobs will reduce your mobility. If a mobility-boosting job is in a location you can barely stand, you might do well to have that job for a few years. Mobility is hard to gauge, but it mostly has to do with how productive you can be and whether you can maintain a good reputation. If you want to work in US academia at some point, it may be hard to move there from other areas (including lesser liberal arts schools, teaching schools, non-academic positions, non-US academia, and US non-economics departments). Ask advice from people who have experience in your area of interest.

Where to find job listings

The JOE is your primary source. It comes out on the first of the month, every month except for January and July. You can download the xml or xls of all records. You can also mark individual jobs and then download only those marked jobs. You can narrow jobs by section (there are six sections e.g. US academic full-time, US academic non-full-time, etc.), and download a pdf for each section. You can also narrow by JEL codes, but I saw that some jobs had misleading JEL codes so I would caution against this. In general, I found quite a bit of wrong information in the JOE ads and downloads, so re-check your JOE information.

Beyond that, there are many sources of jobs—in fact, you can lose huge amounts of time seeking and tracking job listings. Some of this is worthwhile, but there are diminishing returns. The most useful sources list jobs that might not appear in the JOE, so I'll note my favorite of those.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (chronicle.com) and HigherEdJobs.com have a lot of listings that don't end up on the JOE because they are smaller schools and teaching schools. Also listings arrive on these sources continuously, whereas the JOE is only every month. Both sites let you set up an agent that will send you emails when new jobs that meet your criteria appear.

The ERN (at www.ssrn.com) and inomics.com both provide periodic emails as well, and the jobs you'll find in these sources include more international jobs than generally appear in the JOE. Econjobmarket.org also has some jobs, notably international jobs, that are not available on the JOE in addition to many that are available on the JOE. I find this last site hard to parse, so I just waited until I was done applying to jobs that were on this website but that I'd found elsewhere, and then I scrolled through the remaining items to see whether there were any jobs I missed.

Email lists for your specialties are great sources for jobs (as well as lots of other information). There are also some online bulletin boards for specific fields—ask around and do web searches.

There is an online placement service called the Illinois Skills Match (ISM). You fill out a profile and then find employers that match you (and allow them to find you). ISM employers set up interviews at ASSA. I don't know anyone who has used ISM, but it looks particularly useful for government jobs. You can find information on the AEA website. The ASSA-specific page ISM page is http://www.ides.state.il.us/assa/jobseeker/instructions.pdf.

How many jobs to apply to

There's a formula bandied about that goes something like this: you send out N applications; for each k_1 applications you get a first-round interview; and for each k_2 first-round interviews you get a flyout; and for each k_3 flyouts you get an offer. Unfortunately, nobody knows the average k's for your school for the coming year. Also, your k's will differ from the average, and there's a large error term.

You only need one job, but you want two or more offers. Most places fly out 3-5 candidates per position, so unconditionally you want 6-10 flyouts if you can get them. How that translates to first-round interviews is very obscure.

You want as many first-round interviews as you can schedule, so I recommend applying to as many jobs as you can stand applying to. If you find more than 200 or fewer than 80 on your list, you may be off target. However, not all of these will come off the October JOE, or even the October and November JOE's combined—there will be a trickle of new jobs you'll add to your list each week until you finally accept a job.

Parsing the job listings

I found it easiest to download all the JOE listings to a main spreadsheet (see notes in Section 6), augment it with jobs from other places, add lots of detailed information, and then go through waves of processing with successive levels of fineness to subtract jobs I didn't want.

First, I subtracted absolutely unworkable jobs: the listing required a field I don't match, or the location was in my geographic "don't go" zone. I left in jobs that I probably didn't qualify for, jobs that requested (even strongly preferred) but did not require a field I don't have, and jobs I probably didn't want. Then I stopped to get the big picture of the number and mix of remaining jobs, and decided whether to change my criteria.

After any adjustments, I then went over the remaining jobs in more detail. I noted locations and rankings. I read the job listing on the institution's website (time-consuming, but sometimes you find more information), and I gathered information about the school and department. This process knocked some jobs off my list and made some jobs look more attractive.

I had a column in my spreadsheet with an "apply" code: 1 meant I definitely should apply, 2 meant I probably should apply but the fit might not be perfect, 3 meant the fit is marginal, and 4 meant there was no fit. I also had an indicator for how much I liked it (1 meant a lot, 2 meant it's OK, 3 meant it's unpleasant, 4 meant I'd hate it). Most jobs started out with ?'s in both columns. Many ratings changed as I learned more. These columns summarized impressions about jobs and helped me make successive rounds of deletions. I first cut any job with a 4 in either column. Then, on seeing the remaining jobs, I decided whether to cut the 3's as well.

At some point early on, I sorted by deadline date, since some jobs have shockingly early deadlines—my first deadline was in August. I sent out many applications before I had finished parsing my whole list since I knew that the parsing process would take a long time.

Once you figure out your earliest deadline, update your letter-writers. Your admin needs the letters and information on where to send them some time (in my department's case, it was two weeks) before the application deadline. That two-weeks-before date is the letter-writers' deadline, and you should give them six weeks' notice.

What counts as a fit?

Apply for jobs in your field(s) of expertise and related fields, broader fields (e.g. micro general or macro general), as well as jobs coded as "any field," general econ, or teaching econ. You can apply for jobs that list fields that you dabble in but are not your primary fields—let the institution filter you if they think you're not strong enough in that area. Don't apply for jobs you don't have even a tangential fit for, though: you'll just embarrass yourself and irritate the search committee.

What about rankings? If you apply too "high," you're wasting your time. Also, your letter-writers may not be willing to have their letters sent to very high-ranked institutions, so let them advise you. Don't apply to top-ten schools. Probably don't apply to top-20. After that, rankings are neither consistent nor reliable, so don't pull your hair out trying to decide whether to cut a hot-shot job from your list. Again, let the employer filter you out. But you shouldn't apply to many jobs that are top 50 or even top 100, because most of those applications will be fruitless—send a lot of applications to jobs that are roughly "in your league." Of course, most non-academic jobs aren't ranked, so you can apply to those without much concern for "league."

On the topic of schools that are "too good" for us: remember that the market is somewhat segmented. The best students from the top schools will take the best jobs from other top schools. For this reason, just as you do not waste your time thinking about top jobs, don't waste your time thinking about these "top candidates" as your competition, because they are not.

Do apply low, but how low? Use your discretion in cutting jobs you'd never take, but don't be too discriminating, and don't make yourself crazy trying to figure out which to cut. You probably don't need to consider jobs that only require a master's degree (e.g., community colleges). Also, remember that you come out of a respectable research school, even if it's not top ranked. Very "low" places may assume you're not serious, particularly if you look strong. If you are very interested in a low-ranked place, take some action (e.g. sending a signal or at least tailoring a special cover letter) to show you're serious.

8. How to apply

Remember: for each job, send exactly (and only) the items they request, adhere to the methods and instructions (and length limits) noted in the ad, do this by the deadline, and give your admin enough advance warning to send your reference letters.

Once I figured out what my earliest deadline was, I raced to get all of my materials prepared (and read over by multiple friends and faculty) before that date. I also stockpiled physical things needed for the applications. For notes on all of this, see Sections 5 and 6.

Once I had my materials ready and my job list in good shape (though I would continue to add jobs as they came out), I sorted jobs by deadline and grouped them into waves. I wanted to send out about 40 per week, to send each out at least a week before the deadline if possible, and to have all applications done by Thanksgiving (except jobs posted around or after Thanksgiving). Many jobs had no deadline, and I did those in my last waves leading up to Thanksgiving. For jobs you are crazy about, send your applications early—departments often review applications as they are received.

For each wave, I then did the following.

First, I figured out what the application method was for each job. Most jobs are either email, online through their website, online through an aggregate website (mostly econjobmarket.org), or mail. Some jobs give you several options, e.g. mail or email. I always opted for the easier method (email); some argue that printing it yourself is safer and looks nicer. Some applications are completed in two parts, e.g. one part online and one part by mail.

Some notes about application methods. Econjobmarket will be your favorite. For many of these you don't even need a cover letter (though some do require one and for some you can opt to submit one). After you upload your materials to econjobmarket.org once, you're mostly all set. When you apply for your first job through this site, it emails your letter-writers to request their letters. These letters are then stored (but you can't see them), and for each subsequent application that requires letters, you can choose which letters to send. Other online application forms—including European institutions, USAJobs, and the web-based system that many schools use through their human resources websites—are painful and take forever. Some application forms that you download and fill out electronically, notably for UK schools, are just as bad. I have no special advice relating to mail or email applications, except to note that for email applications you have to decide whether to attach a cover letter pdf (in which case you need to figure out what to say in the email) or to paste the text of your cover letter into the email. A colleague suggests using the application email as a nice cover letter, particularly if it is directed at a specific person; that direct personal touch may stand out.

Of 209 applications I submitted, I did 23% by mail, 12% through econjobmarket.org, 21% online through other sites, 35% by email, and the rest by some combination of two methods.

Next, I figured out how reference letters ought to be sent, if at all, and how many letters were required (some wanted three, some four). Some jobs require a different submission method for letters than for the rest of materials. Some jobs ask for reference contact information; these may contact the references immediately or later only contact references for candidates they are serious about. This allowed me to make my "list for Bess" of places my admin needed to send my letters. Your admin may prefer one huge spreadsheet of all places you're applying or smaller sub-lists (the latter was easier for me). Remember, he/she needs to get your spreadsheet some time (maybe two weeks) before your deadlines.

Then I figured out what items each application required. Once I saw how important this information was, I trained myself to enter this information into my spreadsheet along with other basic job information. I used this to check each application before I sent it out. It's rude and wasteful to include materials that are not requested, so attend to this carefully.

I then made my own mail-merge spreadsheet, with address information and other things I wanted to merge into the letters. I made the cover letters by writing a master letter in Word and then mail merging it. If you've never used mail merge, don't be intimidated. Try the tutorial in Word and you'll see it's pretty painless. If you ask nicely, your admin may be willing to hold a mail merge demonstration for your cohort.

Once I had merged the letters for the wave of applications I was working on, I went through letters one by one to make manual tweaks. (Some people tweak letters using a "magic sentence," custom for each institution, that they include in the mail merge; I felt safer doing it manually.) This is the step at which you can add some very institution-specific or job-specific comments to try to get noticed. Remember, some places discard cover letters, but others really do read them. If you're applying to a place where they might be interested but skeptical, you could use your letter to assuage concerns. For example, liberal arts schools often are applied to as backup schools and then ultimately rejected by hot-shot candidates; so if you like the idea of a liberal arts school, you should make a point of saying that. Also, search committees in other countries, even Canada, sometimes assume that Americans are not willing to leave their homeland. (In this case, students from other countries may have an advantage as proven internationalists!) If you're an American who would love to live in Europe, for example, say so in your letters to European institutions.

I spent a huge amount of time on letters to make sure that all the details were correct. There's a lot of room for error here. You will make mistakes; careful reading of each letter is essential. One thing that turned out to be a big help was that below my signature block, I had an "Encl:" list of all of the items I needed to include with this application—I distilled this list from my spreadsheet, but it allowed me to do a final check on each application right before I sent it.

Remember, the more you customize your letters and other items, the more opportunity you have to make a mistake. For example, a friend accidentally included a sentence about teaching in cover letters for government jobs. It is probably worth your time to customize, but be very

careful. This customization was part of the reason I did my applications in small waves rather than all at once, so I could attend to each application carefully.

I saved individual pdf's of letters to email or upload with my digital signature pasted in the document. Then I just started sending them all out. I recorded any confirmations I got that the application had arrived. (Many places don't send confirmations, and in no case did the confirmations turn out to be useful to me, so it was probably not worth recording them.)

If you have questions about an application process or a job, it's fine to email the contact person for the job, even if that person is the department chair. In my experience, these people were often very receptive to questions, and at worst I got ignored (but this happened very rarely).

After you've applied, have your faculty make contact with people they know at these institutions. Go over your list with your advisor and anyone else who's willing to make contacts for you. Having a readable, well-organized spreadsheet will help. Be respectful of any requests your faculty members make (they may ask you to do some parsing or research for them). Don't wait too long to do this: a nudge from your advisor will be useless if the committee has already completed their calls. There are certain kinds of jobs for which a word-of-mouth message like this can be particularly useful. Clearly, a high-ranked place that would normally discard your application is one example. However, personal contacts may also help with any institution that might think you're not seriously interested (as noted above, liberal arts schools, low-ranked institutions, non-US jobs if you're American, etc.)

How do you send more signals of interest in a job? Nudges made by your faculty friends are very important, but if you know people at these departments, you should contact them also. Even if you just met them once at a conference, email anyone you know at places you're applying. There's also a formal system of signaling hosted by the AEA. Candidates can send signals of interest to two employers. The window to send these signals ends on or about December 1. Because these are scarce signals, they can make an impact at a job that might not otherwise think that you're seriously interested. Don't waste a signal on a job that you wouldn't take. At the same time, don't bother signaling a job that is relatively high-ranked, since they will already assume you're interested.

9. First round interviews

By December, you will have sent out your main batch of applications. New job postings will keep trickling in, but you should start getting calls for interviews. I got my first call before Thanksgiving. Some calls are made by search committee members or the search committee chair, who might also be the department chair. Some are made by administrative assistants. Some calls are long and chatty: you may be asked if you have questions about the school, which is tricky if you can't remember thing one about East Flagellum State U when they call. Try to be

smooth and engaging. Don't read too much into the calls: chattiness does not necessarily mean they love you, and a short call from an admin does not necessarily mean they don't.

You may also get calls for non-ASSA interviews at this point—phone interviews, or flyouts at places that don't do ASSA interviews.

For each ASSA-type interview, you need to try to record the following information:

- With whom am I speaking? (You may need to call back later to reschedule.)
- Who will be present at the interview? If it's not known yet, will it be possible for me to check back in closer to the date and find out the names?
- What hotel will you be in? Are you using a disclosure code? If so, what is it? If not, how will I find you? (ASSA provides disclosure codes to employers; once they check in to their room at ASSA, they associate the room number with the code so that candidates can find employers' room numbers online or at an ASSA information desk.)
- Can I have a cell phone number by which I can reach the committee during the conference? My cell phone number is …
- How long will the interview be?

Once an interview was scheduled, I generally emailed my contact person to thank them and to confirm details—I'm not sure whether this was necessary, but it probably doesn't hurt.

As you get interview calls, you may consider updating the job market Wiki (http://bluwiki.com/go/Econjobmarket). I don't feel strongly about whether this is a good thing to do.

How many interviews will you do? You will have a hard time getting many more than 30 interviews crammed in across four days. The most I've heard of was 36, including evening interviews. Most people will have a smaller number; I knew a lot of people with fewer than 10. You should try to get as many as you can at first (and then if you turn out to be overbooked, you can deal with it at that point).

How do you schedule them? Sometimes, you won't have much choice—either the employer has few slots left open or you do. However, if you do have options, clever scheduling makes it easier to get from one to the next and can make favorite employers see you at a "prime" time.

My first criterion was to try to make it so I had a series of interviews in the same hotel rather than bouncing around among hotels too much. Try to leave 15 minutes between interviews in the same hotel, in case you are running late or have elevator problems. Figure out the distance between hotels: a 15-minute gap between interviews at neighboring hotels may be workable, but it may not. If you have to go farther than across the street, plan at least 30 minutes. Most interviews stay on schedule. The only problem I had was with an interview that was supposed to be 15 minutes long; I had to excuse myself after 30 minutes to get to my next.

Does it matter when your interviews are—that is, are there really "prime" interview times? Yes. Late in the day, interviewers may be tired and grumpy, and this goes double for the last days of the conference. On the other hand, your first interview (or several interviews) may be rocky because you haven't hit your stride yet. If you can schedule your favorite interviews for the mornings, particularly the morning of the second day, do. But often you don't have much choice, so don't sweat it too much.

Should you accept all interviews? Yes, at first. You may need reschedule later, and that's fine. Should you ever cancel? I can think of two situations. One is that you later realize you wouldn't work at East Flagellum State U in a million years. The other is that you would work there in a million years but only barely, and you later need to free the slot up for a better interview. An ASSA slot is a relatively scarce resource for an employer, so don't use a slot if it's wasted on you. It's not all that scarce, however, so don't cancel unless it's really not workable. You may get grumpy responses to cancellations, so be gracious and apologetic.

At ASSA

The things I wanted with me at ASSA were:

- My schedule sheet, with all of my interviews and their locations
- A map of the hotels, where I'd already figured out walking directions and whatnot
- A sheet of notes on each school, as discussed in Section 6
- Snacks (apples and granola bars), since there was no time for eating most days
- Mints and dental floss
- Copies of my CV
- A copy or two of each job market paper (though I only needed this at one interview)
- Laptop (which I don't recommend)
- Light reading

Take a moment to look at yourself before each interview, to make sure you are presentable. Read your notes for this institution so that when you walk in you can remember some facts about the institution and interviewers. Most people I know didn't do this, but I openly consulted my notes during my interviews and filled in gaps on it as I talked to them. Nobody seemed to mind and it was incredibly helpful to me. It's impossible to memorize all of the details, and nobody's expecting you to pretend theirs is the only position you're interviewing for. All the same, know basic things about the institution and try to avoid big gaffes.

What are these interviews like? They vary quite a bit, but most of my interviews were nothing like the practice interview I did with my department. Some were fairly structured and organized but most were not. Most were very chatty and each one raced by pretty quickly. Nearly all were friendly. You hear stories of search committee members being rude, walking in or out in the middle of the interview, turning on the TV, etc.—I saw none of this. It is, however, still true that some interviews happen in regular hotel rooms with at least one interviewer sitting on a bed.

Obviously, this can have an odd vibe, particularly if you're a female candidate (most interviewers are men). In other cases you may be interviewing at a table in a large room where hundreds of interviews are going on; these may be noisy or hot or cold or otherwise awkward.

What is the ASSA experience like? It's exhausting regardless of how many interviews you have. The more interviews you have, the more like speed-dating it will be. You'll be meeting a lot of people, which is over-stimulating even if you're a people person. Take every opportunity to be friendly. Make friends with other candidates waiting in hallways even if their tag says Harvard. Most people I met from top schools were nice and charmingly humble. Go to all cocktail parties you're eligible for (though association membership) or invited to (by your school or an interviewing institution, but most of the places I interviewed with did not have cocktail parties). CSWEP (the women's economist group) hosts a Hospitality Room, which I believe is quite nice.

Should you try to present at ASSA? If you think you can handle switching gears, this can be a strong signal that you're a go-getter. It won't make your life any easier, though. It's hard to get on the program, too. But if you think you can handle it you should definitely try.

How should you prepare?

- Make a brief "who I am" spiel: "I am a such-and-such economist with interests in blah blah. I have research programs in blah and blah." How do you tie your work together?
- Make several modular spiels on your job market paper(s). Have a two-sentence version for places that don't want to hear any detail. Be flexible and be open to interruptions.
- Spend a lot of time practicing. Ask yourself all of the questions you can imagine anyone asking, and answer them out loud, to yourself, in real time (not just in your head or on paper). You can get lists of questions from Cawley and other sources.
- Attend as many mock interviews as you can, making notes for yourself about things to do and things to avoid doing, and about the kinds of questions that people ask.
- Think about what you'd be willing to teach and what you'd like to teach, how you'd structure each course, and what textbook you'd use. For your main areas, have an intelligent yet concise answer—they don't want the whole syllabus, just the organizing principles. Use people's syllabi (from your department and from web searches) for ideas.
- Think about your next research projects. Be able to discuss ideas about future work.
- Research the institution and search committee members as much as you can. Also try to research faculty members who have research interests close to yours.

General tips for the interview:

- Make eye contact. Shake hands firmly. Smile a lot. Be outgoing and friendly.
- Be practiced, but try not to seem like you're reading from an internal script.
- Be attentive to the interviewers' interests. Some will prefer a long spiel and some will not, so try to give them what they want. But don't make them work to draw you out.

- Have lots of questions. It's best if these questions can't be answered with information from the institution's website, but most places don't even seem to mind that kind of question. You can have a bank of general questions that you ask at all places ("What are the students like?" "What kind of research support is there?" "Is it an environment that encourages collaboration?") and then specific questions for each school.
- Friendly jokes are fine, especially if you can use them to reflect your knowledge of the school—e.g., I told one interviewer, "So, I hear parking is terrible at your school!"
- Avoid saying anything that might sound like hooey. Obviously, you will not try to snow them about the content of your work. But be honest about things that may be considered weaknesses: your breadth / narrowness of interest, your teaching experience, etc.
- If you really like a place, I can't think of a reason not to declare that now. Be reserved at the offer stage, but at this point, if you're crazy about the school, why not say it?

What are the most difficult situations? In any tough spots, the best you can do is try to keep your wits about you, and above all stay pleasant and friendly. Here are some examples:

- Some interviews are very technical, and for me it was very hard to change gears from chatty interviews to interviews in which I was grilled about the assumptions I had made about an error distribution. You may be asked hard questions. You're the expert on your work, but these are probably smart people, too. Listen, think, and respond honestly.
- You may get a "charity interview," where a fancy place grants you a slot as a favor to an advisor of yours. Some of these will treat you like any other candidate, but in some cases the committee members consider the interview a waste of their time. On the other hand, it turns out that charity interviews are pretty rare; so if people seem dismissive, it could just be that they're tired and grumpy. So never assume you're in a charity interview.
- You may get something that seems like a terrible signal. At one interview, my stomach dropped when my interviewers started discussing their school's cocktail party and did not invite me; I thought that meant I was out of the running (quite erroneously, as it turned out). Stay cool because you're probably wrong about inferences like this.
- You may get questions that are completely out of left field. There are illegal questions, and these you can deflect without pointing out that they're illegal. Sometimes you'll get an irrelevant comment—e.g. "How does this relate to aggregation?" In responding, adhere to your personal style, but always be polite and try to avoid hooey.
- A common question is, "Why do you want to come here?" You have to have a reasonable answer to that, which means you have to have looked at your notes or remembered details you like about the place. But it's much harder to answer this pleasantly when it is preceded (as it sometimes is) by an interviewer saying negative things about the institution. Respond in a positive way, if you can.
- Cutting short an interview that's running over. Most interviews will be interrupted by either a member of the committee who says, "Time's up!" or a knock at the door by the

next candidate. But sometimes you're more constrained than the committee, so keep your eye on the time and make appropriate expressions of regret if you have to rush out.

What do you need to learn from the interview?

- Take notes if it's your style to do so.
- Who was at your interview? It may not be the same group you were told.
- What is their time-frame for making flyout calls?
- They may tell you to drop them a line if you're in the geographic area. I think for some institutions it's part of the script, and for some it indicates interest, so it's a muddy signal.
- Don't get disheartened or buoyed up by offhand comments—if they say, "Good luck on your job search," it may not mean anything. If they don't invite you to their cocktail party, that may also not mean anything. Even if you thought an interview went badly, you may find out later that you did fine. So put it all out of your mind.

After each interview, you need to "reset" yourself so you can go into your next interview fresh. Leave the last interview behind, particularly if it was a bad experience.

Throughout ASSA, you may run into members of your interviewing committees in hallways, at sessions, etc. Be friendly and enthusiastic, regardless of how the interview went. The hard thing is that you're meeting so many people that you may start forgetting faces.

Send thank-you notes as soon as possible to the interviewing committees (maybe copying committee members with whom you had contact with who were not at your interviews). Email is fine, but don't use a form email—customize each to that interview and mention interesting things they said in your interview, e.g. useful comments on your paper, things you learned about the school, etc. I suggest sending grateful emails to all committees, even if the interview went poorly or you decided the institution was not for you. Be most effusive with your favorite places. I sent one email per interview, but it's probably better to send one per person. I sent mine late and as a result received a few flyout offers from schools before I sent their thank-you email; you can read that as a lesson that it doesn't matter, but I found it embarrassing and wish I had been more prompt.

Don't expect a response to your thank-you note! If you do get one, don't read too much into it. You may get messages that say, "Hope to see you soon!" from people you'll never hear from, or messages that say "Good luck on your job search!" from the school that you end up working for. Every former job candidate I've spoken to has gone through this emotional roller coaster, so try not to build too many stories given the meager evidence you're receiving.

10. Flyouts

Calls for post-ASSA flyouts can come as soon as the last day of ASSA, or as late as late February. (Some can come much later if institutions have odd budget issues, and of course non-US schools may be on different schedules.) As noted above, some institutions jump right into the flyout stage without a first stage. You want to have as many flyouts as you can, but you shouldn't do a flyout for a job you wouldn't take. Flyouts are very expensive for the institution, particularly in terms of the time costs and the slot that could be offered to a more fruitful candidate. Be considerate and respectful. (Of course, don't be too picky!)

For some flyouts, the institution will make all of the reservations for you; for some, you'll make all or part yourself (most commonly, you make the plane reservations and the school makes the hotel reservation). You'll be reimbursed for expenses, but it will take time—generally up to a month after your visit. Some institutions will not reimburse you for the change fee incurred from cancelling a non-refundable airline ticket. It is apparently not uncommon, notably in UK jobs, for the job candidate to bear some of the job search risk. For example, if you go for a flyout, you may not be reimbursed if you are offered a job and you reject it. If there is fine print, read it. However, these costs are generally worth bearing if you're interested in the job, and you should not read them as a sign that the institution is dysfunctional or unsupportive.

What will the flyout consist of? A standard US academic flyout may be all day plus some number of meals. Most of my flyouts, for US academia and government jobs, went like this:

- Fly in the evening before
- Have dinner with faculty
- Have breakfast with other member(s) of the faculty
- Have a series of meetings with faculty throughout the morning and afternoon
- Meet with Dean(s) and / or Provost and / or some kind of university / college-level committee on appointments. This may be a very important part of your day.
- Have lunch with faculty
- At some places you may also meet with human resources to discuss benefits
- You may have a tour of campus or the local area at some point
- You may meet with students at some point
- Give a job talk (60 or 90 minutes) at some point
- At some places you may teach a class (they may dictate a topic or let you choose)
- Have dinner with faculty
- Fly home

Some flyouts are quite different. For example, European schools may interview you for 30 minutes and have you give a 30-minute job talk, and have that be it. At least one of my European schools offered a Skype interview instead of a flyout, but I had doubts about how well a candidate could come across.

When should you schedule your flyouts for? Do each flyout as soon as you can, but usually you won't have too many options. You can do two in a tiring (but workable) week; three is possible but tough. If you can visit two institutions in one trip, do. If you get a flyout to, say, DC, call other DC institutions you interviewed with to let them know you'll be in the neighborhood. When you're trying to schedule a flyout with an institution, it's fair to tell them that this or that week is "busy" or that you're "traveling;" they will know that you mean "I have another interview," but of course there's no need to tell them who you're interviewing with.

Before each flyout, I did the following:

- Research the heck out of the institution and department
- You'll receive an itinerary before you visit. Research each person on the itinerary, and glance at others in the department as well (especially in your fields). It's nice in your interviews to be able to mention interesting things you found on CV's or websites.
- Come up with a list of questions, particularly for people like a dean, chair, or director.
- Find out who'll be at your job talk and prep accordingly. You may need to make changes if there will be a lot of non-economists, or students, in attendance.
- Find out the true time limit for your job talk (minus questions).
- Talk to your faculty to see whether they have friends at the institution. If you are pals with someone on the inside, drop them a line.

I wanted to bring these items on my flyouts:

- Laser pointer / clicker is handy but not essential
- USB drive to move your presentation to the machine of interest
- Mints and dental floss
- Laptop
- All your notes
- Reading material
- You can bring overheads of your slides in case of technical problems but I'm not sure it's necessary anymore; I didn't and in the one case of technical problems they didn't even ask, but just moved me to another room

Remember that your purpose on the flyout is two-fold. First, you want to sell the department on you: you're the person they need, you'll be a pleasant colleague, you're a civilized human being, you can talk about economics, you're intellectually curious. As you make the rounds of faculty offices, ask each person about their research and be open to questions about yours. Second, they want to sell you on their institution. They wouldn't have given you a flyout if they didn't think you were a strong candidate. So take the flyout very seriously and use it to learn everything you need to make your decision. Ask people about their experience with the institution's resources, work environment, teaching (if applicable), etc. Ask them what they like about the place. Ask what makes a successful and happy member of the faculty or staff there.

The flyouts feel just as much like speed dating as the ASSA interviews do because of the number of people you're meeting with throughout the day. Each interview slot is 30-45 minutes and you've just gotten started when you to get whisked off to your next "date." Again, throughout your day, it seems to me like a good thing to express (honest) enthusiasm about the school or the location. They'd rather make an offer to a candidate that will accept than one that won't.

There's another thing you may want to ask about on your visit, but it can be tricky: tenure. You don't want to give the impression that you're a shirker. I asked department chairs and junior or recently-tenured faculty about tenure because it was important to me know the expectations and norms, and to know whether the tenure system is controversial or problematic. However, if you feel that asking these questions will make a bad impression, you can skip asking.

Interview meals can feel perilous to those of us who were not raised with strict table etiquette. Brush up on this kind of thing before you start your flyouts, if you think it's an issue for you. Having been an interviewer at a bunch of meals now, I can say that these meals are nearly always awkward. One funny thing that happens is that you worry about what you're ordering. Do you order wine? (If your interviewers are, sure.) I had one interview dinner at a really good restaurant in Seattle; one interviewer commented sadly on how everyone but me had ordered safe and boring things. At another interview dinner, an interviewer told me that when he was on the market he'd intentionally ordered things that would make him look like a bold risk-taker.

You have many sources of advice about your job talk, and I only have a few comments to add. First, stay positive. If you start getting bogged down in questions you think are silly or aggressive, take a deep breath—you're standing at the front of the room, and your attitude sets the tone of the presentation. Second, be open to (and grateful for) comments and suggestions. Take notes! You may get lots of useful feedback. But don't be a pushover! I've now seen a few candidates humbly accept comments that were incorrect, and that reflected very poorly on them. Third, before the job talk—either in your morning interviews or at the very start of the talk—ask what the department's seminar norms are (questions asked throughout or held to the end, etc.). Every department is different. Non-economics departments in particular are much more reserved; many economics departments can be like either a pack of wild dogs or a basket of inquisitive puppies, depending on how positive they're feeling.

Immediately after your flyout, send another round of thank-you messages, one to each person. Be specific and positive, even if you felt badly about how it went! Note comments people gave about your work, or projects of theirs that you discussed. I sent emails, but the nicest way to do this is hand-written notes.

Just as with ASSA interviews, a flyout that you think went badly may actually have gone well from the employer's perspective. I got an offer from my most uncomfortable flyout, and others have similar stories.

Stay connected with email and voice mail while traveling. You probably won't have a minute to check them during the day of your interview, but you'll check them at night. You can set up your inboxes to tell people that you're out of contact for the day. It's not a bad thing when returning calls to other institutions to say that you're "traveling"—again, they will know that it's a flyout, and therefore you're popular, and therefore they should value you highly.

What if you don't get a flyout offer from a place that you like (where you think you stand a chance)? Drop them an email. The worst they can do is tell you they've already filled the position. Getting information this way is much more useful than getting it from rumor sources. Obviously, don't pester people, but it's reasonable to send a friendly email.

11. Offers and negotiation

Most institutions will make an offer within a few days of their last flyout. They usually won't tell you if you did not get the offer, but occasionally they'll tell you if you're "number two."

If you don't hear anything from an institution you like that you had a flyout with, should you check in? If you have a "friendly source" on the inside, you may be able to make sneaky inquiries about the status of the search. On the other hand, you could always email your search committee contact. I sent some emails saying, "I know you said you'd be making the offer soon, I just wanted to let you know I'm still interested in the position, etc." Some people think this will make you sound desperate and you shouldn't do it. Use your judgment.

So what happens when you get an offer? Don't say yes right away! Be delighted, and don't hide your delight, but ask for as much time as they can give you—usually a week or two.

Get all of the details on the offer, for example:

- Salary
- Summer support (how much is guaranteed)
- Teaching load, number of preps, course reductions (if applicable)
- Moving costs
- Startup funds and annual research budget (if any)
- Annual travel budget
- Other unusual benefits (e.g. pre-tenure leave)
- When does the appointment start?

Also see whether you can get access to the faculty or employee handbook—this will let you learn about benefits, and probably also about terms of tenure.

Some institutions will not call it technically an offer, but rather they are informing you that they would like to recommend you for an offer. Some places get a verbal agreement with the candidate before preparing an offer letter because the offer letter is hard to change, so negotiations happen before the offer is actually inked. In some cases an "offer" can only come from the Provost. Try to get an assurance that this quasi-offer is as solid as an offer.

Now you have an offer but it's still verbal. Be discreet: don't tell too many people until it's signed and sealed! (Do tell your parents, spouse, etc.) In the mean time, you should do two things.

First, get advice. Run the offer by your advisor and the department's job market advisor. See what they think sounds good, and what's worth pushing on. Inside sources may be willing to help. You may get friendly emails from people at the institution saying, "I hear you got an offer. If I can answer any questions, just let me know." This is a matter of department norms, though; some departments just don't do this. I loved these and I took advantage of it to talk to several faculty members about their experience in the department.

Second, use this offer to push on other institutions you like, in a nice way. You can say, "I have an offer from another institution [you don't have to say where], and I need to tell them something by [date]. Can you tell me what's going on with your search?" You may be able to stir up another offer or two this way. Don't forget about the places that you liked but that never called for a flyout—they probably can't move fast enough, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

In this way, you may end up with several offers. You may have a clear favorite, in which case your choice is easy and you just want to find ways to improve that offer. If you are having a hard time deciding, get more advice, but let the institutions "help" you: when you call to negotiate, you can push on each institution to sweeten their offers.

When you call back, you should have decided under what terms you will accept the offer. Call as soon as possible. That is, don't make them wait any longer than necessary. If you don't accept, they want to be able to move forward.

Always negotiate the offer you are considering accepting. Negotiating will generally not make you look like a jerk, and the worst thing that can happen is that you'll ask for something and the employer says "no." Negotiating is hard, and most of us do it poorly. It helps to have another offer that you can honestly say is competitive, but that's not a necessary condition. Different institutions are able to make different deals, so consider a range of options. Some institutions are rigid on salary, but may be able to get you a bigger startup fund. Others can't offer moving costs but can give you an extra month of salary. Be reasonable and friendly; frame it in terms like, "If you add XYZ to the offer, I'd be really happy, and it would help me be very productive!"

Is there any scenario in which a negotiation request you make will offend an employer so badly that the offer will be rescinded or that your employment will be tainted by your colleagues'

assumption that you're a jerk? I doubt it, as long as you are reasonable and friendly and frame all requests as things that would make you more productive.

Try to learn at what level concessions are made. In some cases, you negotiate directly with a chair or dean who has power to change the offer. This is good, but also bad, because you're in the domain of non-cooperative game theory. In other cases, you're talking to someone who might help you negotiate—for example, with a chair when concessions are made at the level of dean or provost. Such a person may be willing and able to help you frame a successful request.

As a note: I and another candidate in my cohort did the exact same thing. We each had three offers, but for each of us, one was clearly dominant. To that employer, when we called to accept, we each said, "I'll take it! But can I have [list of requests]?" Neither of us felt comfortable pretending that the other offers were competitive. If you are familiar with game theory, you may understand that this is not objectively a wise strategy. Even so, we both got a lot of what we were asking for and we were happy in the end. So it may be that this naïve strategy is not so foolish after all.

12. Troubleshooting

What if your market doesn't seem to be moving? At any point, if you have this feeling, ask for advice and suggestions from your advisor, the job market coordinator, and other faculty.

At some point in December, you may worry that you don't have as many calls as you think you should have. Get advice about whether it really is time to worry—you may be freaking out over nothing. If it's time to worry, your advisors may be able to shake a few more interviews out of the trees for you by making some calls or sending some emails. Don't be shy about asking. There are stories of famous economists who were in this position and whose advisors were able to get kickstarted. At the same time, it might mean that you didn't apply to enough jobs. Stay tuned and see if it's not too late to widen your net.

What if you're not getting flyouts? Jobs and post-docs will continue to trickle out through the spring season, and then there's always the Scramble. The Scramble is a foreshortened and smaller version of the regular job market season, sponsored by the AEA. Scramble jobs are posted in the JOE, and you register as a Scramble participant. Get information from the AEA website on the timing and particulars if you want to do the Scramble.

At a certain point, if you seem to have a substantial chance of not getting a workable job, ask your advisor whether you can get funding for another year. There's no shame in trying again next year—you'd rather end up with a job that will make you happy next year than a cruddy job you take this year that will lock you in regrets for some time to come.

13. Your new job

There are only a few comments I want to make about post-job-market life.

First, once you have a job, be happy. Pat yourself on the back. You've just resolved a large amount of uncertainty, and most likely you have a job that you'll like a lot.

You do have some work to do before you dive into that job. Most people finish up your dissertation and defend it and graduate before start the job. This is not always the case, though; many employers will let you defend and graduate in your first year on the job, although some will give you a reduction in salary if you don't have a degree before you start.

If your job is in a new location you'll be preparing to move. Your department and/or your institution may have an orientation (or a series of orientations), and this may figure in to your decision about when you want to arrive. You may not find out about these orientations right away so it's worth asking about them. Usually the institution doesn't mind too much if you miss them, but I found mine to be very helpful.

Your new colleagues can be tremendously helpful resources in all sorts of things, from what neighborhoods are good to live in to what cell phone carriers work best there. I found people to be very generous and willing to answer questions. It was a pleasure to get to invite them over for dinner once we were settled so we could repay their kindness.

Many schools offer rental housing to their faculty; in some cases this housing is great, but in other cases it's not so great. Your colleagues can give you hints. It's often a good idea to make a visit to the area (with your significant other, if applicable) to check out housing, but many people (myself included) don't even do that.

I read some commentary recently about new faculty buying houses. You may have been renting throughout grad school and you may be considering buying when you get to your new location. However, a new faculty member may not want to buy right away. Of course, it's helpful to get to know the pros and cons of the neighborhoods, and that will have been true for any move you've done in the past. But if you're in an academic-type position, you are most likely facing a tenure clock. You have to consider the possibility that you and your job might not agree with each other after a few years or that you might not get tenure. You may also have a pre-tenure leave to consider. Remember that you must own a house for some number of years for it to be worthwhile to buy. Also, it's not always easy to rent out your house when you're on leave or to sell it if you decide to move on. These features of academic life may merit special consideration before you buy a house.

Before you start at your new job, you may also want to wrap up any research projects that are easy to finish and you may want to get new projects started. It may be difficult during the post-job-market/pre-job time to get much done, since you'll be defending and moving, but if you have any slack in your schedule you should take advantage of it. You'll be grateful later. If you're

starting as an assistant professor, you may find it very difficult to get much research done in your first year. If your work is well-positioned before the semester starts you'll feel much better about things.

If your new job involves teaching, you need to plan your classes. Faculty in your new department will probably be happy to share syllabi and other materials, and faculty at the department where you got your degree will also. If you're teaching a class you've taught before, that's a big advantage. However, you might be expected (subtly or explicitly) to use the same textbook as others in your department, so you may have to make changes. See whether your department has any guidelines for how classes in general or your classes in particular are conducted—there may be suggestions about number of exams and that sort of thing. Find out whether you get a TA. Look in the school calendar for oddities such as a very short semester or a very long fall break. In any case, planning a new class is very challenging, and you should give yourself time to do it.

You may be contacted by students and faculty throughout the summer, perhaps before your job technically starts. You may have obligations to fulfill quite early, probably simple things like contacting the registrar about enrollment or submitting requests for textbooks or classrooms. Obviously, you want to get off on the right foot. Stay tuned on your new email address.

Regardless of the kind of job you take, you may find yourself on the other side of the job market process as soon as your first year. You may be reviewing packets, sitting on interview panels, and ultimately being part of the decision process. This is truly a strange feeling, but you'll get used to it!

14. Conclusion

The job market is exhausting, but it can be fun. Most likely it will culminate in exactly what it should: you finding a job that's a good fit for you. The data seem to show that most economics PhDs end up with a job that they like, so you probably will, too.

Try to enjoy the process and try to keep it in its place: remember, the job search is not your job, and if you handle yourself as a real "grown-up" economist you will be perceived as one by potential employers.

One of my coping mechanisms was to view the whole process as a way to meet a lot of interesting people in my field from many different institutions. These include people I will continue to meet throughout my professional life. A friend told me he approached the job market as an odd kind of road trip, and he made a job market "scrapbook" with photos and souvenirs from each flyout. Approach it seriously, but in whatever way works best for you.

The hardest thing is that you spend these months living under a cloud of uncertainty, and that can be very stressful. Focus on the positive aspects of the process as much as you can, and try to keep things in perspective.

I wish you the very best of luck!

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