

Academic Application Boot Camp

How to Give an Effective Job Talk

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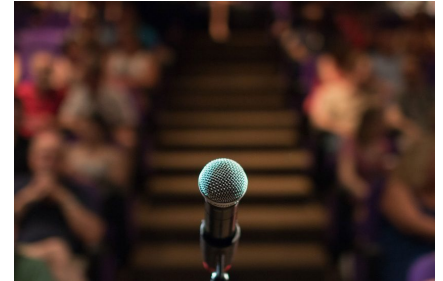
Disclaimer:
This is about job talks at
academic institutions
based in the US

(But feel free to ask about
applying in Europe)



Outline

- Preparing for your job talk
- My job talk
- Resources, Q&A
 - Ask me anything: applications, zoom interview, job talk, chalk talk, interviewing, prepping for 1:1, visits, budgets & negotiations...



There is no recipe!

What works for me may not work for you and vice versa

- Everyone has their own story to tell!

Most of the 'how to give a talk' advice still holds:

- Not too much data on slides
- Not too much text on slides
- Use informative headings, takeaways ('results' is not a good title)
- Explain your axis
- Animate your slides
- (Visual) interim conclusions
- No acronyms or abbreviations
- Consider a black slide
- Modulate your voice
- Practice your talk
- Practice your talk again
- Etc.

Difference between job talk and other talks

- Audience
- Goals
- Future directions

Audience

Members of the search committee (may include student member)

Department chair (different from search committee search)

Faculty

Postdocs

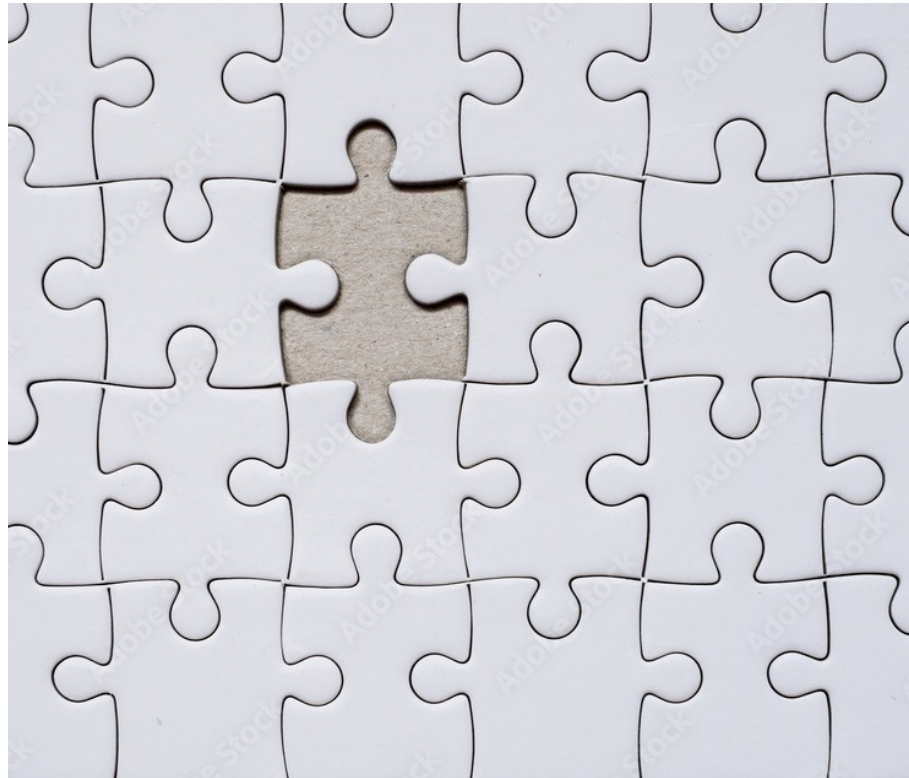
Graduate students

Others

- ➔ All faculty and trainees should be able to follow your talk, especially the non-experts (i.e. from a different subfield within neuroscience)
- ➔ Explain what challenges you overcame
- ➔ Explain what you contributed to your field

Research the department

- What type of position are they trying to fill?



Research the department

- What type of position are they trying to fill?
- How do you fit their department?
- Examples:
 - explain clinical relevance if you are applying at a med school
 - don't skip your computational work if there are potential computational collaborators
- ➔ balance the different components of your talk to fit your audience
 - experiments vs theory
 - tool development vs applications
- ➔ in *future directions*: don't depend on a resource the department doesn't have and you cannot set up yourself

Practical information

- Duration
 - If you have a 1-hour timeslot: Aim for 45-50 minutes
 - Don't let questions derail you: Answer any clarifying questions, but it is ok to limit other questions in the middle of your talk
- Bring your own laser pointer, clicker, adapters, charger, and anything else you need
- Bring your own laptop, but have the presentation also ready on a flash drive and in the cloud
- Ask for details
 - For example, some departments may ask to incorporate more future directions if there is no chalk talk.
 - You may not be able to see your presenter notes if you have to screenshare.
- You may only have ~2 weeks between the invitation and the on-site visit
- Even if it is a small room & small audience: you should always stand up if you can

Example timeline

Submit application package

- Research statement
- Teaching statement
- Diversity statement
- CV
- Letters of recommendation

Oct. 1 – Dec. 1

Zoom interview (optional)

Dec. 1 – Dec. 15

Invitation for on-site visit

Dec. 19 – Jan. 11

On-site

Jan. 30 – Mar. 8

- Job talk
- Chalk talk
- 'Interview' / meeting with search committee (rare)
- 1:1 interviews with faculty
- Meeting with dean / dept. head
- Lunch with trainees, dinner with faculty

Offer, optional 2nd visit (offer may have a deadline)

Negotiations & decision

Tell a story

- Don't try to cover all the data you ever collected.

Tell a story!

→ Think about the segues that link things together

- What to include:
 - Anything that supports your story
 - An overview of important concepts / tutorial if needed
 - References to the relevant literature
- What *not* to include:
 - Anything that doesn't support your story
 - Experimental details that only experts may care about
 - References to journal names for your own publications

Tell a story

- Don't try to cover all the data you ever collected.
Tell a story!
- My story:
 - Flexible information streams between areas
- Why:
 - It gives me a 'primate specific' question
 - It is *not* (really) what my PI is known for
 - It uses 'new' tools, but not for the purpose of tool development
 - Links my 'past' and 'future'

Example job talk

- Chalk talk the next day
 - In my job talk I introduced all the concepts I would discuss the next day
 - Job talk and chalk talk can go hand-in-hand
- 1:1 meetings both before and after the talk
- Significant proportion of systems neuroscience, primate labs
- ‘Arts and Sciences’ (not medical school)

Boot camp bingo!

Scan the QR code:

Resources

- www.howtogiveataalk.com
- How to give a great scientific talk, Fleming, Nature, 2018
- Bootcamp
- Future PI slack
- Many others...

Practice with:

- People who will give you critical feedback
- People not in your subfield of neuroscience
- Diana Li
- Your PI / lab members
- Anyone who will listen :)

Discussion points

- How to explain the vision for your future work
- How to tell your story in statement, job talk, chalk talk, 1:1, etc (repeating is fine!)
- How to navigate Q&A
- How to prepare for the questions you may get
- How to handle your zoom audience
- Saying 'I' vs 'we'
- Target audience
- What to include/exclude from your talk
- When to start preparing your talk (many weeks, if not months!)
- How to handle dark images such as histology (turn lights back on after if dimmed!)
- Differentiating from your postdoc advisor
- Use of a black slide
- Use of laser pointer (I didn't use one)
- Use of overview slide
- Building slides & presenter tools
- Including journal names when citing your own work
- Tailoring to a specific department

Good Luck!

