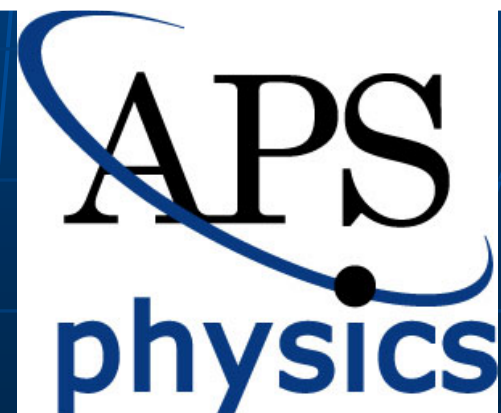


# Help with Physics Jobs

- Searching and applying
- Handling an interview
- Looking to the long term

***The APS Committee on  
Careers and Professional  
Development***

(Gordon Thomas, NJIT)



# 1a. Searching

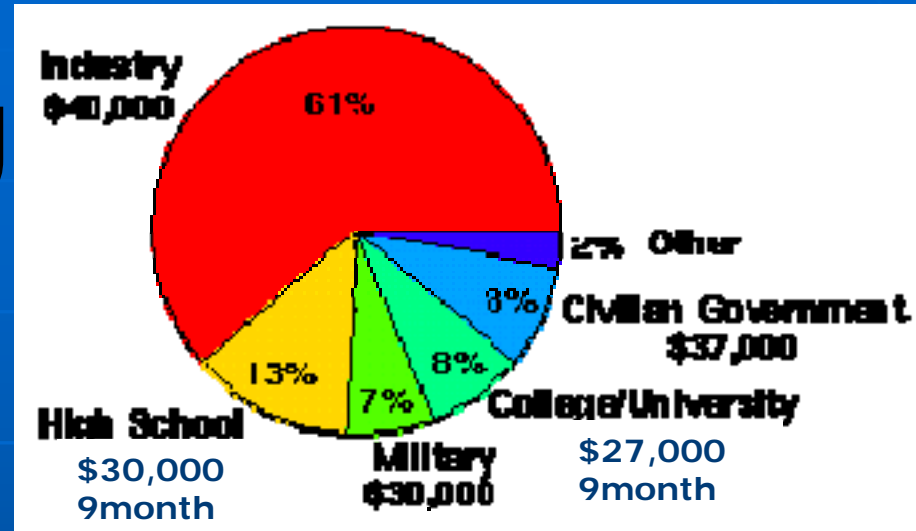
- **Allow time:**

A search can take many months, and even involve rejections.

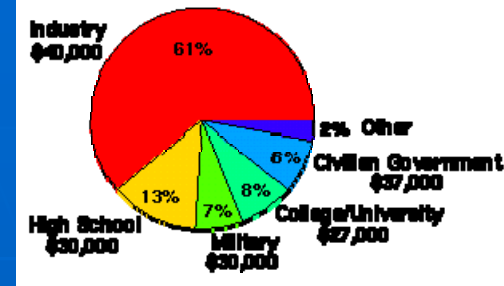
- **Check varied types of jobs where physicists can thrive:**

92% of undergraduate physics majors end up in good, non-university jobs, often after an advanced degree.

- **Check career resources:** [http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/upload/professional\\_development.pdf/](http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/upload/professional_development.pdf/)



# 1b. Searching



**Study a book on searching:** (“Bolles” is good.)

Bolles, Richard Nelson. *What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changes*. (Ten Speed Press, 2007).

Ridgen, John. *Landing Your First Job: A Guide for Physics Students*. (AIP).

**Make a web search of various types of openings where physicists fit:**

[www.ieee.org](http://www.ieee.org); [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com); [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com); [www.hotjobs.com](http://www.hotjobs.com)

**Check physics academic (and other) openings:**

<http://www.aps.org/careers/> In 2006, this site listed 1249 applicants and 216 jobs (Note the odds.) The site’s listings peak in January, with new ones every month.

# 1c. Searching for hidden jobs



**Search for work related to yours** in various types of jobs. Check papers, talks and web sites. For industrial physics info, see <http://units.aps.org/units/fiap/>

**Contact people you have met or whose work matches yours:**

- Express your interest in his or her work. Exchange information only and expand your network. Try to leave a good impression. Don't discuss jobs.
- Later, in a separate contact, you can ask if he or she knows of jobs with any employer in your field of work.
- See "Bolles."

**Ask your friends.** Let them know that you're searching and seek their help. Contact friends of friends. **Make new friends** at conferences and seminars. Network.

Always be very **polite** and as **brief** as possible.

# 2. Applying



## a. Target a small number of job opportunities.

- Only target good matches to your interests and skills. Study the company or institution as well.
- Target different types of jobs. See "Bolles."

## b. Write a special cover letter for each position.

- Write to someone you know or who is in your field.
- Express interest in one of his or her projects.
- Describe how you match for position.
- Make the letter short and well written.
- Have a good writer polish it.

# 2. Applying



## c. Write a special Resume for each:

- Near the top, summarize your interest in specific examples of the employer's work.
- Nearby, list your skills that are relevant to this work.
- Nearby, say specifically how you could help.
- Near the end, annotate your papers and talks briefly to explain relevance to their work.
- Include the usual content of a CV, in 2 to 3 pages. See, e.g., <http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/>

## d. Be scrupulously honest, don't hesitate to emphasize your talents, and be polite.

# 3. Preparing for an Interview



- a. **Study the recent work of each person you'll meet.** Get their names from your host. Make sure you know what sort of candidate they're looking for – ask your host.
- b. **Prepare a special version of your talk or your talking points for each employer.** Bring pictures you can show and ideas you can mention at individual or small group interviews. Include in your talk or talking points:
  - The work of your hosts and your interest in it.
  - The skills and training that make you a good match to their work.
  - Your main accomplishment and its relevance to your interviewers.

# 3. Preparing for an Interview



- c. **Explain everything simply and without jargon** so that an administrator who is from a different field can understand.
- d. **Keep your comments or your talk brief.** For a talk, find out the time allotted and use only 75%, leaving the rest for discussion.
- e. **Practice your talk or your talking points** with an audience that will make suggestions. Take the suggestions.
- f. **Bring extra copies** of your slides and illustrations



# 4. Interviewing



## a. Repeat your theme:

- you're enthusiastic about what each interviewer is doing
- you have skills to help him or her do it.

**b. Accept suggestions; don't argue.** Assume your hosts are trying to be helpful.

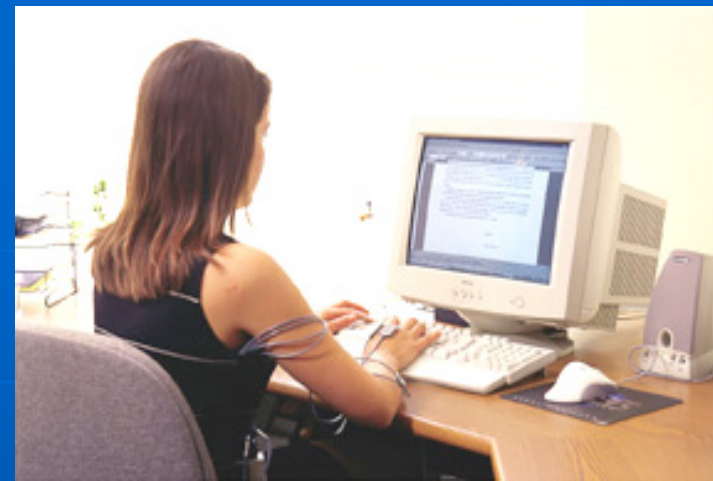
**c. Say you don't know,** when you don't, but add what you do know that is relevant.

**d. Keep in mind that they want a good colleague,** both technically and in terms of personal relations.

**e. Be scrupulously honest,** and don't hesitate to put your best foot forward.

**f. Get contact information.** Be sure you have the names of all those with whom you have spoken.

# 5. Following up an interview



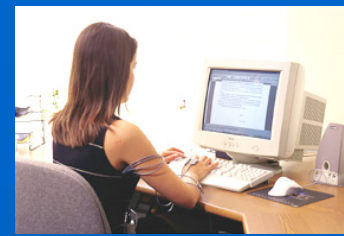
## a. Write notes of thanks to each person with whom you interviewed.

- Reiterate your interest in his or her work in particular
- Reiterate your relevant skills.
- Get help in polishing your writing.

## b. Let the employer know your status promptly

- if you have another offer
- if you accept another offer.

# 5. Following up an interview



## c. Check on the hiring decision

- Find out the schedule for the decision from your host.
- Don't bother him or her before the expected decision time.
- After that time, politely, ask the status of your application.
- Renew your statement of interest, if true, even if you learn that they've made another offer.
- Keep in mind that the selection process is inexact and sometimes the second or third ranked candidate ends up getting the job and is a success.

# 6. Long term

Most physicists will change jobs, so plan ahead:

- Set long term goals.
- Polish your basic writing and speaking.
- Make friends in your field at conferences and seminars.
- Apply for internships
- Read career resources, such as at [http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/upload/professional\\_development.pdf/](http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/upload/professional_development.pdf/)

**Summary:** seek out and prepare for each employer individually.

**Send comments** to [knowles@aps.org](mailto:knowles@aps.org)

