

5 Mistakes That Keep Testers Stuck

(And How to Fix Them in the Next 90 Days)

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Introduction: Why This Guide ?

After two decades in software testing. And mentoring over 100 QA professionals through career transitions, I have noticed something interesting:

The people who succeed aren't necessarily the smartest.

They avoid specific, predictable mistakes.

Meanwhile, talented testers work hard. Still they stay stuck for 5,7, or even 10 years - wondering why their careers are not moving forward.

Most of them make common mistakes.

This guide covers the 5 most common mistakes I see (and the ones I made myself early in my career).

If you are a QA engineer feeling stuck, underpaid, or overlooked, his is for you.

Let's get started.

Mistake #1: Learning Too Many Tools (Instead of Mastering One)

The Problem:

You open a job description and see:

- Selenium
- Cypress
- Playwright

- Appium
- JMeter
- Postman
- Jenkins
- Docker
- Kubernetes

And you think: *"I need to learn ALL of these to be fit for the job."*

So you start:

- 3 Udemy courses
- 2 YouTube tutorials
- 1 bootcamp

Six months later, you know a little bit about everything. But they can't confidently use any of it in a real project.

Why This Happens:

Job descriptions are wish lists, not requirements.

Companies write: "Must know Selenium, Cypress, Playwright"

They hire: Someone who is Excellent at one and can learn the others. They see the potential.

The Fix:

Pick ONE automation stack. Go deep. Build projects. Implementation is super important.

Example Stack for Web Automation:

- Language: Python or Java (pick any one)
- Framework: Selenium (still 70% of jobs) OR Playwright (growing fast)
- Test Framework: Pytest or TestNG
- CI/CD: Jenkins (basic understanding)
- Version Control: Git (mandatory)

Timeline: 90 Days

Weeks 1-2: Language basics (Python recommended - easier to learn)

Weeks 3-6: Automation framework (Selenium or Playwright)

Weeks 7-8: Build ONE complete project (Example: e-commerce site automation)

Weeks 9-10: Add to GitHub, write README, showcase on LinkedIn

Weeks 11-12: Apply strategically, prepare for interviews

Example My Experience:

Krishna (One of my mentees- Manual Tester, 6 years experience)

Before: Tried learning Selenium + Cypress + API testing simultaneously. 8 months, no progress.

After: Focused only on Selenium + Python for 3 months. Built an automation suite for an e-commerce site. Got SDET role at ₹12 LPA (was making ₹7 LPA).

Your Action Step:

Right now, pick one tool. Master in the next 90 days.

Write it down: "I will master [tool] by [date]"

Don't pick two. Just one.

Mistake #2: Watching Tutorials Without Building Projects

The Problem:

Your learning pattern looks like this:

1. Watch 20-hour Selenium course → Feel accomplished 👍
2. Watch another course to "fill gaps" → Feel more accomplished 😎
3. Get to interview → Can't answer: "Tell me about a project you have automated"
4. Rejected in the interview 😞

You have been "learning" for 6 months. But you have nothing to showcase.

Why This Happens:

Tutorial Hell = Passive Learning

Note this : Watching someone code ≠ Knowing how to code

It's like watching cooking videos and **thinking** you can easily cook.

The Fix:

Build 2-3 Portfolio Projects (Even If You Have No Job Experience)

Project 1: Basic E-commerce Automation (Weeks 1- 4)

- Pick a demo site (like Sauce Demo, OrangeHRM, or Automation Practice)
- Automate: Login, Add to Cart, Checkout, Search
- Tech stack: Selenium + Python + Pytest
- Upload to GitHub with clear README

Project 2: API Testing Suite (Weeks 5 - 8)

- Use a public API (like JSONPlaceholder, ReqRes)
- Write tests: GET, POST, PUT, DELETE
- Validate responses, status codes, error handling
- Tech: Postman/REST Assured + Python Requests

Project 3: Full Framework (Weeks 9 - 12)

- Page Object Model (POM)
- Data-driven testing (CSV/Excel)
- Screenshot on failure
- Extent Reports
- Jenkins integration (bonus)

Example From Experience:

Rahul (One of colleagues - Manual Tester, 8 years, ₹6.5 LPA)

Before: Completed 4 Udemy courses. Zero projects. Couldn't answer project questions in interviews.

After: Built one robust automation framework for a demo banking site. Showcased on GitHub. Got SDET role at ₹11 LPA in 4 months.

→ **His GitHub project got him an interview.**

→ **His ability to explain it got him the job.**

Your Action Step:

Today: Pick one demo website you will automate.

Examples:

- <https://www.saucedemo.com> (e-commerce)

- <https://opensource-demo.orangehrmlive.com> (HR system)
- <https://automationexercise.com> (practice site)

Start with login automation. Then expand.

Mistake #3: Generic LinkedIn Profile (That Says Nothing)

The Problem:

Your LinkedIn looks like this:

Headline: "QA Engineer at XYZ Company"

About: *[Empty or one line]*

Experience: "Responsible for testing..."

You wonder why recruiters never reach out.

Meanwhile, someone with less experience but a better profile gets multiple interview calls.

Why This Happens:

Recruiters search LinkedIn using keywords.

If your profile doesn't have the right keywords, you are invisible.

Note this : Generic profiles = No search visibility = No opportunities

The Fix:

Optimize Your Profile for Search + Conversions

Headline (120 characters - most important):

Bad: "QA Engineer at Tech Corp"

Good: "SDET | Selenium + Python | Automation Framework Design | Ex-[Company] | Helping QA Engineers Transition to Automation"

About Section (2,000 characters):

Structure:

1. **Hook:** "After 6 years in manual testing, I made the switch to automation..."
2. **Story:** Brief background, key achievements and impacts made
3. **Skills:** List technologies (keywords for search)
4. **CTA:** "Open to new opportunities" or "Available for mentoring"

Example:

After 6 years as a manual tester, I transitioned to automation and 2x'd my package in 18 months.

I specialize in:

1. Web automation: Selenium, Playwright, Cypress
2. API testing: Postman, REST Assured
3. Framework design: Page Object Model, Data-Driven, Hybrid
4. CI/CD: Jenkins, GitHub Actions

My Recent achievements:

1. Reduced regression testing time by 60% (15 hours → 6 hours)
2. Built automation framework for 200+ test cases
3. Mentored 5 junior QAs in automation

Tech stack:

Python | Java | Selenium | Pytest | TestNG | Jenkins | Git | Jira | Postman

Open to SDET and Senior QA Automation roles

Let's connect if you're hiring or looking to transition to automation.

Example From Experience:

Sneha (One of my mentees - 6 years experience)

Before: Generic profile. 2 recruiter messages in 6 months.

After: Optimized headline + about section with keywords. 15 recruiter calls in first month. 3 interviews. 1 offer at ₹14 LPA.

She didn't learn new skills. She just made her existing skills visible.

Your Action Step:

Tonight: Rewrite your LinkedIn headline and about section.

Use the template above. Add your projects, your achievements, your tech stack.
Do NOT copy from your friends !!

Post it on LinkedIn: "Just updated my profile. What do you think?"

(This also signals to the algorithm that you are active.)

Mistake #4: Applying to 100 Jobs Without Strategy

The Problem:

Your job search looks like this:

1. Open Naukri/LinkedIn
2. Click "Easy Apply" on 50 jobs
3. Send same resume to everyone
4. Get 2 responses out of 50
5. Neither moves forward

You are exhausted. Demotivated.

Why This Happens:

Spray and pray doesn't work in 2026.

Recruiters can spot generic applications immediately.

And if 100 people apply, the ones who personalize their approach get callbacks.

The Fix:

Apply to 5 Companies Strategically (Not 100 Randomly)

Step 1: Target List (Companies You Actually Want)

Pick 15 companies based on:

- Tech stack matches your skills

- Reasonable commute/remote option
- Salary range fits your expectations
- Company culture appeals to you

Step 2: Research Each Company

- What products do they build?
- What tech stack do they use? (Check job descriptions, Glassdoor, LinkedIn)
- Do you know anyone who works there? (Check LinkedIn connections)

Step 3: Customize Your Application

Resume:

- Add 1-2 sentences in summary that mention the company's tech
- Example: "Seeking SDET role focused on [their tech stack]"

Cover Letter (yes, write one):

Hi [Hiring Manager Name],

I'm applying for the SDET role at [Company].

I noticed you use Selenium + Java for web automation - that's exactly what I've been building for the past 2 years at [Current Company].

Recent projects:

- [Specific achievement relevant to their needs]
- [Another achievement]

I'd love to bring this experience to [Company] and contribute to [their product].

Available for a call this week if you would like to discuss further.

Best,

[Your Name]

Step 4: Follow Up

- Day 7: Send LinkedIn message to hiring manager or recruiter
- Day 14: Polite email follow-up

Example From My Experience:

Amit (One of mentees - 5 years experience)

Before: Applied to 200 jobs in 3 months. 6 responses. 0 offers.

After: Applied to 15 companies strategically. 8 responses. 3 interviews. 2 offers.

Success rate: 4% → 53% by changing strategy. Not skills.

Your Action Step:

Today: Create a list of 15 companies you would actually want to work for.

Research their tech stack. Find hiring managers on LinkedIn.

Quality > Quantity.

Mistake #5: No Network = No Hidden Opportunities

The Problem:

You think: "I'll just apply online. That's how people get jobs."

Reality: 70% of jobs are filled through referrals before they are even posted.

While you are clicking "Apply" on Naukri, someone else is getting referred internally and skipping the entire queue.

Why This Happens:

Companies prefer referrals because:

- Lower hiring risk (vouched for by an employee)
- Faster process (skip initial screening)
- Better culture fit (referred by someone who knows the company)

If you have no network, you are competing in the hardest possible way.

The Fix:

Build a Strategic Network in 90 Days

Week 1- 4: Activate Your LinkedIn

Daily Routine (15 minutes):

1. Post 1 piece of value (tip, insight, project update) 3x/week
2. Comment thoughtfully on 5 posts in your niche daily
3. Send 3 connection requests with personalized notes
4. Do not directly ask for referrals. No one responds.

Example Connection Request:

Hi [Name],

I saw your post about Selenium best practices - really insightful.
I'm also working in test automation (currently building a framework for [project]).

I would love to connect and learn from your experience. Thanks.

- [Your Name]

Week 5-8: Engage with Target Companies

Strategy:

1. Identify 5-10 SDETs/QA Engineers at your target companies
2. Follow them, engage with their posts
3. After 2-3 weeks, DM with genuine interest (not asking for jobs yet)

Example DM:

Hi [Name],

I have been following your posts on API automation, really helpful.

I am curious: How did you transition from manual to automation at [Company]?

Would love to hear your story if you have 15 mins for a call.

Week 9-12: Ask for Referrals (The Right Way)

After building genuine connections:

Hi [Name],

Hope you're doing well!

I saw [Company] is hiring for an SDET role. Given my experience with [tech stack], I think I would be a good fit.

Would you be open to referring me? Happy to share my resume and any other details you need.

No pressure if you're not comfortable. Just thought I would ask!

Thanks,

[Your Name]

Example From Experience:

Suma (My friend - 7 years experience)

Before: Applied to 100+ jobs online. 6 interviews in 6 months. 0 offers.

After: Built a network on LinkedIn for 3 months. Got 2 referrals. Both led to interviews. 1 offer at ₹16 LPA.

She spent less time job hunting and got better results.

Your Action Step:

Today: Send 5 personalized connection requests on LinkedIn.

Target: SDETs or QA Engineers at companies you want to work for.

Don't ask for anything yet. Just connect.

Bonus Section: The 90-Day Action Plan

Month 1: Skill Building

Week 1-2:

- Pick your tech stack
- Learn language basics (Python/Java)
- Set up development environment

Week 3-4:

- Start automation framework course
- Build first mini-project (login automation)
- Post progress on LinkedIn

Month 2: Portfolio Building

Week 5-6:

- Complete Project 1 (E-commerce automation)
- Push to GitHub with README
- LinkedIn post: "Just completed my first automation project..."

Week 7-8:

- Start Project 2 (API testing or framework enhancement)
- Optimize LinkedIn profile (headline, about, experience)
- Start engaging daily on LinkedIn (15 mins)

Month 3: Job Search

Week 9-10:

- Complete Project 2
- Create target company list (15 companies)
- Update resume with projects

Week 11-12:

- Apply strategically to 15 companies
 - Leverage network for referrals
 - Prepare for interviews (behavioral + technical)
 - Follow up on applications
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Conclusion: Your Next Steps

You now know the 5 mistakes that keep QA engineers stuck:

1. Learning too many tools → Master one stack
2. Tutorial hell → Build portfolio projects
3. Generic LinkedIn → Optimize for visibility
4. Spray and pray applications → Strategic targeting
5. No network → Build genuine connections

The question is: What are you going to do about it?

You have two choices:

Option 1: Close this guide and do nothing.

(Most people do this. They stay stuck.)

Option 2: Pick one mistake to fix this week.

(This is how careers actually change.)

Need More Help?

If you want personalized guidance:

1-on-1 Consultation

60-minute session to audit your profile, review your projects, and create a custom roadmap.

Book here: <https://tinyurl.com/Jay-1o1>

Self-Study E-books

Step-by-step roadmaps for:

- Manual to Automation Transition- Playbook
- How To Get Visibility As A Tester

By Now: https://topmate.io/jayateerth_katti/

Mentoring Call

For serious career changers:

- Resume and LinkedIn optimization
- Mock interviews and feedback

- WhatsApp support for questions
- Job search strategy

Book here: <https://tinyurl.com/Jay-mentoring>

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One Last Thing...

I made every single one of these mistakes early in my career.

1. Spent 2 years learning tools I never used.
2. Watched 100s of hours of tutorials without building anything.
3. Applied to 100s of companies and wondered why nobody responded.

It took me years to figure out what I just taught you in this guide.

You can shortcut that process.

Start today. Pick one mistake. Fix it this week.

Three months from now, you will look back and thank yourself.

Good luck!

-Jayateerth Katti

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Found this guide helpful? Share it with a fellow QA engineer who needs it.

Connect with me on LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/jayateerth-katti](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jayateerth-katti)