

CREATING AN ELEVATOR PITCH

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WHAT IS AN "ELEVATOR PITCH"?

An "Elevator Pitch" is a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced marketing message about your professional self that your mother should be able to understand in the time it would take to ride up an elevator. It should contain a "hook" or "theme" and go no longer than 60 seconds; resonate with your unique personality and interests, and contain a follow up request for a business card, a referral, or future meeting.

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

It helps get your foot in the door with potential employers whether on the phone, e-mail or in person at a conference, chance social networking event, or through an informal face-to-face chance encounter through a friend or relative. You will have a "ready-made" two sentence answer whenever someone asks "Tell me about yourself?" or "What are you hoping to do when you graduate?"

- It forces you to figure out what your primary skill sets are and what makes you valuable.
- It helps you do the hard work needed to deliver an effective "cover letter" that entices an employer to read your resume and grant the interview.

COMMON MISTAKES BY RECENT GRADUATE STUDENTS

- Lack of confidence in what you have to offer: *"I don't have a lot of experience in ____ yet."*
- Lack of focus or goals: *"I have a lot of interests and would want to do anything" or "I don't want to limit myself."*
- Inability to articulate the learning and skills gained from one's academic background: *"I know my degree has nothing to do with my interest in _____, but..."*

USING CAREER LABELS TO GET STARTED

Begin with your education or areas of career experience and follow up with your primary *transferable skill* related to your strongest area of expertise. Examples:

- International Trade and Immigration Researcher: strong writer, strong project management skills
- PhD in International Relations: aptitude for policy analysis
- PhD in Linguistics: advanced multilingual skills and ability to explain difficult concepts
- PhD in History and Graduate Student Vice President: skills with effective communication and managing interpersonal diplomacy
- PhD Graduate Student Research and part-time university staff employee: strong organizational ability and planning and scheduling skills

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DEVELOPING YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

- Write down your **research and graduate student accomplishments**: your academic, research, publications, presentations, teaching
- Write down your **job-related skills**: your work-related experiences, volunteering, internships, jobs, and campus involvement
- Write down your **transferable skills**: what are the skills you have gained from the previous experiences and how do they relate to the job you are applying for (e.g., teaching assistant - organizational ability and public speaking skills)
- Write down your **soft skills**: Describe who you are and how you operate (e.g., hard-worker, innovative, collaborative).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH?

- This short 15 – 30 second sound bite concisely and memorably introduces you. It allows you to succinctly and positively position yourself in the mind of the listener.
- Your first objective during an elevator pitch is to get them to like you, because if they don't like you, they might just take the stairs next time.
- It allows flexibility, so that you can match the context for what you share about yourself to the person you are speaking with (e.g., potential employer vs research conference vs interested colleague)

CONTENT

- **Profession**: state your professional identity and what you do.
 - Consider stating your true profession rather than your job title. For example: “I am a trainer”, “I work as a Learning and Development professional”, “I am aspiring to work in University Administration after graduation”.
 - For example: “*I spend my days researching and analyzing data in order to___*” and “*I teach, create, and develop.*” People who articulate what they *do* are just seen as doers; people who *inspire, teach and create* are seen as experts. State this in the present tense (“I am”, not “I was”).
- **Expertise**: state the competencies or skills you use to perform your work. *Competency* is a set of behaviors that describe excellent performance in a particular work context; a bundle of skills. A *skill* is something you can do well.
- **Types of Businesses**: name the environments in which you have worked or want to work in. For example: nonprofit, startup companies, tech industry, Fortune 500 companies, government agencies.
- **Special Strengths**: identify the things that make you different from others who perform the same work or have your same qualifications (your competition!). Do you have a special certification, unique approach to a problem, or exceptional technical knowledge?

DELIVERY

An elevator pitch isn't much good if first you don't come across as a credible, likeable individual. To achieve that, remember your business etiquette. The first thing you have to do is introduce or re-introduce yourself. Stick out your hand, and put your face and name back in context for them. Only then should you explain how they can help you. And after you deliver a pitch, try to give a really brief review of your talents, education, or skill set.

- 30 seconds - 60 seconds in length
- Practice so that the delivery is natural, conversational, and effortless.
- Sound the part - show confidence and let your passion show through.
- Look the person you're speaking to in the eyes.

SUMMARY OF HOW TO DEVELOP AN ELEVATOR PITCH AND/OR ANSWER THE "TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF" QUESTION

- Create a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced statement about your professional self
- Include a "hook" or "theme" to make yourself memorable
- Keep your answer to about 30-60 seconds
- Should resonate with your unique personality and interests
- Talk only (or mostly) about your professional self and utilize a mix of strong skills (e.g., PhD in English) and soft skills (strong writer who works well under pressure)
- Identify profession, expertise, types of business you'd like to work for and special strengths
- Avoid showing a lack of confidence, lack of focus, and lack of skills

Example:

My name is Susan Hernandez and I am a third-year religious studies doctoral student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I do research on how religious influences affect health choices, and my work is currently supported through a grant from the Health Sciences fund. Through my graduate studies, I have developed skills in qualitative analysis and research design and am interested in furthering my experience in data analysis. Religious studies has always been a passion of mine, but I never felt that a career path in religious leadership was right for me. Instead, for me, religious studies is truly the study of beliefs and how they influence people's behavioral choices. I have decided to apply my previous skills as a health specialist and my interest in religious studies to work in hospitals and health centers in order to work towards the well-being of others. I believe that my skills in research methodology and interest in health fields make me uniquely qualified for this position.