



Elevator Speech

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What's an elevator pitch, and how can it help your career? An elevator pitch – also known as an elevator speech – is a quick synopsis of your background and experience. The reason it's called an elevator pitch is that it should be short enough to present during a brief elevator ride.

This speech is all about you: who you are, what you do, and what you want to do (if you're job hunting).

Your elevator pitch is a way to share your expertise and credentials quickly and effectively with people who don't know you.

Done right, this short speech helps you introduce yourself to career and business connections in a compelling way. It can help you build your network, land a job, or connect with new colleagues on your first day of work.

When and How to Use an Elevator Speech

If you're job searching, you can use your elevator pitch at job fairs and career expos, and online in your LinkedIn summary or Twitter bio, for example. An elevator speech is a great way to gain confidence in introducing yourself to hiring managers and company representatives.

You can also use your elevator pitch to introduce yourself at networking events and mixers. If you're attending professional association programs and activities, or any other type of gathering, have your pitch ready to share with those you meet.

Your elevator pitch can be used during job interviews, especially when you're asked about yourself. Interviewers often begin with the question, "Tell me about yourself" — think of your elevator pitch as a super-condensed version of your response to that request.

What to Say

Your elevator speech should be brief. Restrict the speech to 30-60 seconds. You don't need to include your entire work history and career objectives. Your pitch should be a short recap of who you are and what you do.

You need to be persuasive. Even though it's a short pitch, your elevator speech should be compelling enough to spark the listener's interest in your idea, organization, or background.

Share your skills. Your elevator pitch should explain who you are and what qualifications and skills you have. Try to focus on assets that add value in many situations. This is your chance to brag a bit — avoid sounding boastful, but do share what you bring to the table.

Practice, practice, practice. The best way to feel comfortable about giving an elevator speech is to practice it until the speed and "pitch" come naturally, without sounding robotic. You will get used to varying the conversation as you practice doing so. The more you practice, the easier it will be to deliver it when you're at a career networking event or job interview.

Practice giving your speech to a friend or recording it. This will help you know whether you're keeping within the

time limit and giving a coherent message.

Be positive and flexible. You often aren't interviewing for a specific position when you deliver your pitch, so you want to appear open-minded and flexible. Don't lead with the stuff you'd rather not be doing. (For example, if you don't want to travel a lot for work, that's completely legitimate – but you needn't volunteer that information right off the bat.) This is your chance to make a great first impression with a potential employer. Don't waste it.

Mention your goals. You don't need to get too specific. An overly targeted goal isn't helpful since your pitch will be used in many circumstances, and with many different types of people. But do remember to say what you're looking for. For instance, you might say, "a role in accounting" or "an opportunity to apply my sales skills to a new market" or "to relocate to San Francisco with a job in this same industry."

Know your audience, and speak to them. In some cases, using jargon can be a powerful move — it demonstrates your industry knowledge. But be wary of using jargon during an elevator pitch, particularly if you're speaking to recruiters, who may find the terms unfamiliar and off-putting. Keep it simple and focused.

Have a business card ready. If you have a business card, offer it at the end of the conversation as a way to continue the dialog. If you don't, you could offer to use your smartphone to share your contact information. A copy of your resume, if you're at a job fair or a professional networking event, will also demonstrate your enthusiasm and preparedness.

What Not to Say and Do During Your Elevator Speech

Don't speak too fast. Yes, you only have a short time to convey a lot of information. But don't try to fix this dilemma by speaking quickly. This will only make it hard for listeners to absorb your message.

Avoid rambling. This is why it's so important to practice your elevator speech. While you don't want to over-rehearse, and subsequently sound stilted, you also don't want to have unfocused or unclear sentences in your pitch, or get off-track. Give the person you're talking to an opportunity to interject or respond.

Don't frown, or speak in a monotone way. Here's one of the downsides to rehearsing: it can leave you more focused on remembering the exact words you want to use, and less on how you're carrying yourself. Keep your energy level high, confident, and enthusiastic.

Modulate your voice to keep listeners interested, keep your facial expression friendly, and smile.

Don't restrict yourself to a single elevator pitch. Maybe you're interested in pursuing two fields — public relations and content strategy. Many of your communication skills will apply to both those fields, but you'll want to tailor your pitch depending on who you are speaking to. You may also want to have a more casual, personal pitch prepared for social settings.

Elevator Pitch Examples

Use these examples as guidelines in crafting your own elevator pitch. Make sure your speech includes details on your background, as well as what you'd provide an employer with:

I recently graduated from college with a degree in communications. I worked on the college newspaper as a reporter, and eventually, as the editor of the arts section. I'm looking for a job that will put my skills as a journalist to work.

I have a decade's worth of experience in accounting, working primarily with small and midsize firms. If your company is ever in need of an extra set of hands, I'd be thrilled to consult.

My name is Bob, and after years of working at other dentists' offices, I'm taking the plunge and opening my own office. If you know anyone who's looking for a new dentist, I hope you'll send them my way!