A Graduate School Professional Development Workshop

The Elevator Speech

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What is an elevator speech?

A short speech that effectively describes:

• who you are
• what you do
• what you’re interested in
• how you can be a beneficial resource to your listener

for the purpose of capturing your listener’s attention & being considered for professional, academic, or other important opportunities.
Riding in an elevator

- The term “elevator speech” or “elevator pitch” is derived from the idea that you should be able to “sell” yourself in the amount of time it takes to ride up/down an elevator with an important contact.

- Some say the speech should take 30 seconds. Others, 1 minute. You can do both…
Why should I?– The 5 P’s

As you maneuver through your academic and professional careers, you are sure to meet individuals who may be in a position to assist you and/or advance your career. When this happens, you want to present yourself as poised, polished, prepared, passionate, and professional. A concise and effective elevator speech is the way to make a positive lasting impression.
When would I use an elevator speech?

- An interview, when they pose the question: “So tell us about yourself…”
- Academic conferences
- Career fairs
- Meetings (professional or social)
- Calling employers about a position
Here’s how…

Prepare for your speech by answering the following question on paper:

1) Who is your audience?
2) Why are you interested in the institution/company the audience represents?
3) Who are you?
4) What are your key strengths?
5) What adjectives describe you?
6) What is it you want others to know about you?
7) What is your career goal?
8) What are you searching for in a job/opportunity?
9) What significant contributions can you make?
10) How can you immediately benefit this person/project/institution/company?
11) What should the listener do as a result of listening to your speech?
Craft your speech

Use the following structure:
- Describe who you are
- Describe what you do
- Describe how you are unique/different/better; how you can contribute
- Describe your immediate goal

1 minute = 150–200 words*
Finalize your speech

- Connect sentences together to make them flow

- Review what you have written to remove long words or jargon—anyone should understand your speech

- Cut out unnecessary words
Other tips

• Your speech should be focused on the needs of the employer
• The speech should be conversational in tone; it should not sound rehearsed, which is why memorizing it word for word is not typically advised. Focus on the ideas, not each word.
• Keep it short, informative and interesting—make the listener want to learn more.
• Use your own voice to be memorable
Read your speech out loud

You want your speech to sound authentic and conversational in tone. Reading it aloud will help you tweak it to sound more authentic.
Practice and get feedback

- Rehearse in front of a mirror
- Record yourself
- The more you practice, the smoother it will be
- Rehearse it in front of friends. Ask what they thought key points were. Revise if necessary
More than one speech

- Customize for particular audiences or situations
- Time variations
Be confident!

- Eye contact
- Voice volume
- Smile—be pleasant
- Deliver your message with a confident and positive delivery!
Time to write *your* elevator speech...