

What's an elevator speech, and how can it help your career? An elevator speech (which is also called an elevator pitch) is a quick synopsis of your background and experience. Done right, this short speech helps you introduce yourself to career connections in a compelling way.

What's In an Elevator Speech?

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.

Read on for guidelines for what to include in your speech, when to share it, and examples of elevator pitches.

When and How to Use an Elevator Pitch

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 events, or any other type of gathering, have your pitch ready to share with those you meet.

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 to 60 seconds — that's the time it takes to ride an elevator, hence the name.

You need to be persuasive. Even though it's a short pitch, your elevator speech should be persuasive 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 get comfortable with an elevator speech is to practice it until the speed, and “pitch” come naturally, without sounding robotic. You will become comfortable varying the conversation as you practice with it. Try saying your speech to a friend, or record it. This will help you know if you are staying within the time limit and giving a coherent message.

Be flexible. You aren't interviewing for a specific position, so you want to appear open-minded and flexible. It's your chance to make a great first impression with a potential employer.

Mention your goals. You don't need to get too specific. A 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 "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.

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. A copy of your resume, if you're at a job fair or professional networking event, will also show 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 fast. This will just 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 sound stilted and robotic, you also don't want to have unfocused or unclear sentences in your pitch, or get off-track.

Don't frown, or speak in a monotone. 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, positive, and enthusiastic. Modulate your voice to keep listeners interested, and keep your facial expression friendly. 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 Speech 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.

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!

I create illustrations for websites and brands. My passion is coming up with creative ways to express a message, and drawing illustrations that people share on social media.

I'm a lawyer with the government, based out of D.C. I grew up in Ohio, though, and I'm looking to relocate closer to my roots, and join a family-friendly firm. I

specialize in labor law, and worked for ABC firm before joining the government.

My name is Sarah, and I run a trucking company. It's a family-owned business, and we think the personal touch makes a big difference to our customers. Not only do we guarantee on-time delivery, but it's me and my father answering the phones, and not an automated system.