

Your. Elevator. Pitch.

And, Presenting Your Research in Conversation so
People will Care, and Remember You.



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What is the goal of an elevator pitch?

- Create a memorable and positive impression
- Be able to “sell” yourself in the time it takes for an elevator ride with an important contact
- Provide a statement of your research interests and experience informally and orally
- Open the door to further conversation



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BUILD CONNECTIONS



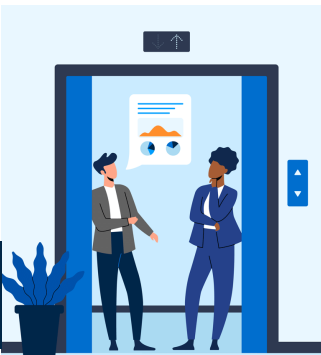
What is an elevator pitch?

- Concise, planned, well-practiced **marketing message** about your professional self/your research that:
 - Your family member **should quickly understand**
 - contains a “**hook**” or “**theme**”
 - Is **30 – 90s** (aim for 1 minute)
 - Reflect your unique value and interests
- 3 “Cs”

Concise

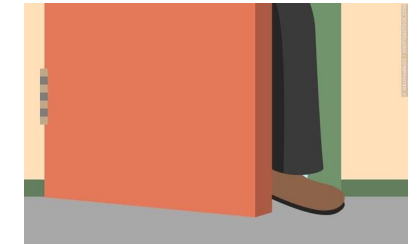
Clear

Confident



Why do you need an elevator pitch?

- Gives you a **foot in the door** with potential employers or research collaborators
- Forces you to **communicate** not only what you do, but also **why you're valuable**, in a concise, clear way
- Poster sessions, possible collaborators, receptions
- According to a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Yale University study, about 70% of all jobs are found through **NETWORKING**



Psychologist World



Agility PR

The ability to communicate your work and ideas to different audiences is a skill that **sets you apart from a crowd**



What is an Elevator Pitch that is More a “Research Spiel?”

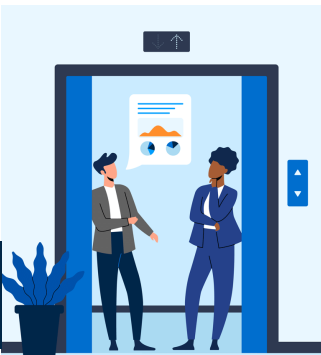
- a concise statement of your research interests and experience to be shared informally and orally in various professional contexts.
 - a brief encounter with a scholar in your field at a conference
 - introductions around a table at the beginning of meeting
 - introduction to a guest speaker in the hallway right before his/her talk
 - conversation at a reception for a speaker

Questions your elevator pitch/research spiel should answer:

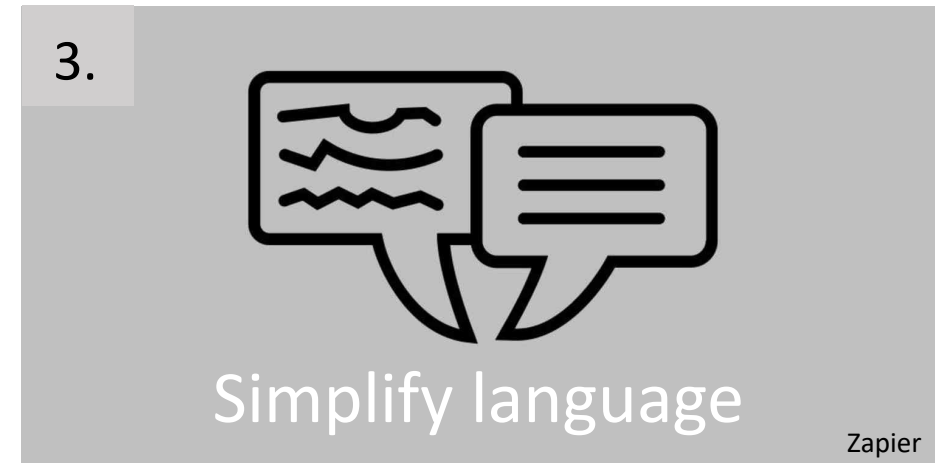
- What is the topic of your research?
- What is the problem, issue, or question that you are asking and addressing in your research?
- Why is that problem interesting and important? (i.e. So what?)
- How does your work connect with a broader disciplinary conversation about this topic/problem in your field, and what does it add to that conversation?

Begin to draft your pitch

- Take a couple minutes to fill out the “create an elevator pitch” worksheet – we’ll come back to it, so no need to make it perfect



How to make your elevator pitch



1. Know your audience

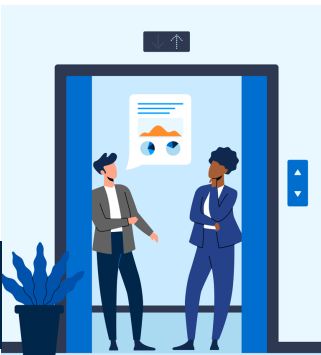


- Keep in mind **WHO** you're talking to and adapt your pitch to the **context**
- **Tailor your pitch** to the specific needs, interests, and expectations of your audience
 - This requires research! If you're going to have the opportunity to talk to a potential employer, you need to spend time looking up who they are, what they care about, and what type of employee they're looking for
- A pitch to get hired is different than a pitch to describe your research
 - In the first example, you must highlight your relevant skills and achievements whereas in the second example, you should focus on what will be relevant to your audience



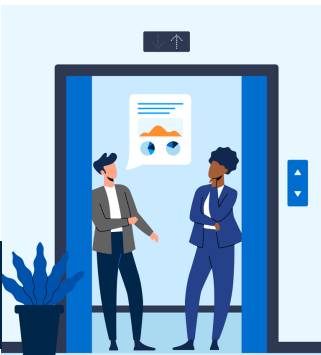
Components of an elevator pitch/research spiel

- **Intro** – Who are you?
- **Hook** – What problem do you study? Or start with an observation
- **Solution** – How are you answering this question?
- **Summary and benefits of this knowledge** – What have you found? Why is your work useful, What are you looking into next? Draw back to hook.
- **The stage of your career** – I'll be finishing my [insert graduate degree] this spring and looking for a job

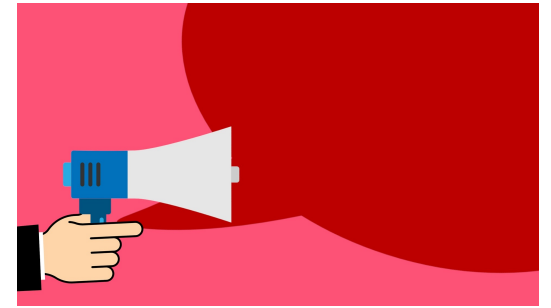


Examples of a hook

- Memorable hooks:
 - “I study the biogeography of salt” is a lot more interesting than “Ionic requirements are pervasive among all life, most notably consumers, and given that sodium is distributed non-randomly in the biosphere, it stands to reason that salt limitation will vary as well.”
 - Name the important issue your research tackles. “I study how memory changes as people age by taking pictures of brain activation while people do memory exercises.”
 - “Have you heard of disease X?” Yes? Explain your research. No? Short description, stats on people affected, whether cause or cure known.



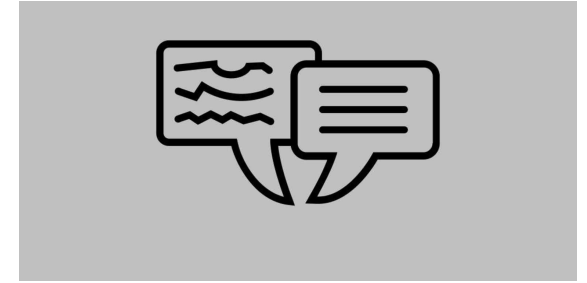
2. Craft your message



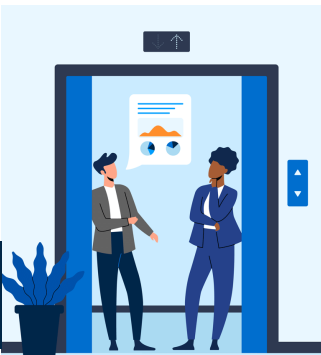
- Now that you have an idea about who your audience is, it's time to think about the **content and message you want to convey**:
- What is the **problem** that you're investigating?
- What is your **solution**?
- Why **does it matter** to your audience? Why should they care?
- **Key tip**: trade-offs exist between problem and solution – too much of a problem will instigate fear while too much of a solution will tell the audience the problem is already solved



3. Simplify and tighten up your pitch



- Your pitch is supposed to be short – **aim for 60s**
 - **Draft and then practice** in front of mirror and with friends & family who don't know anything about your work
 - Keep Editing.
 - Tell a Story, Ask Questions, keep it open ended. It's hard. You can do it.
- Your pitch should be **approachable to the listener**. Use active voice and avoid complex words (jargon) so people outside of your field will understand. **Target your audience**.
 - Tools to “de-jargon” (simplify) your pitch:
 - [De-Jargonizer](#)
 - [Simple Writer](#)
 - [Readable](#)



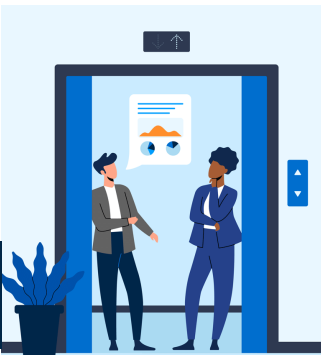
Common mistakes in a pitch

- **Too much information.**
 - Keep short. Point is to spark conversation not describe every tiny result of your experiments.
- **Downplaying importance of your work.**
 - Avoid: “I’m just a 2nd year,” or “I only measured one thing and lots of other factors are important” or “You should talk to my advisor, she knows more than I do.”
- **Misjudging your audience; using too much jargon.**
 - Don’t start too narrowly – be broad and simple
 - Tailor your pitch to your audience



Common mistakes cont'd

- **Lack of confidence** in what you have to offer
 - *I don't have a lot of experience yet.*
- **Lack of focus or goals**
 - *I have several interests and don't want to limit myself*
- **Inability to articulate the learning and skills gained from degree and work experience**
 - *I know my degree isn't directly related to my interest*



Example for networking/introduction purposes

- Hello, my name is _____, and I'm completing my master's degree in _____ with a specialization in _____ at URI. I am interested in a career (or position as a) _____ in the _____ field. During my master's, I [researched _____/taught _____/served as president of _____] and developed skills in _____. I worked last summer as a _____ with _____ and discovered I really enjoy _____. Can you tell me more about _____.

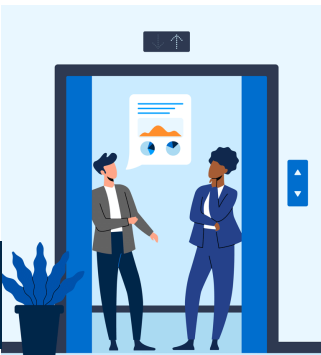
Who are you?

What do you do?

What are you looking for?

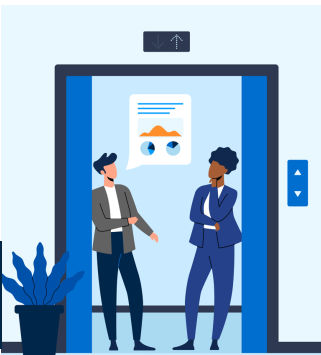
What are your skills/unique qualities?

What is your direct ask?/Goal for this pitch?

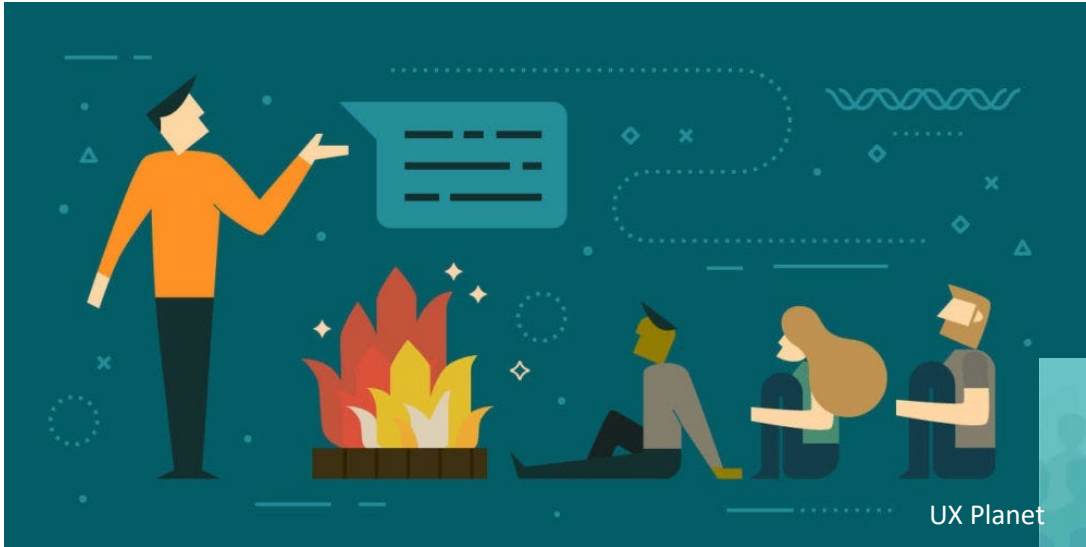


In summary: features of an elevator pitch

- **Conversational exchange or dialogue.** Listen carefully, ask questions, respond.
- Don't ramble. Remember 1-2 mins,
- **Seek connections** between you or your research and your new acquaintance's job or interests
- Show **enthusiasm** about your work!
- Make eye contact. Smile! Stand Still and Straight!
- Customize for particular audiences. **Avoid jargon.**
- Sound like a potential **colleague**, not a student.



Last tips before we practice!



Tell a story

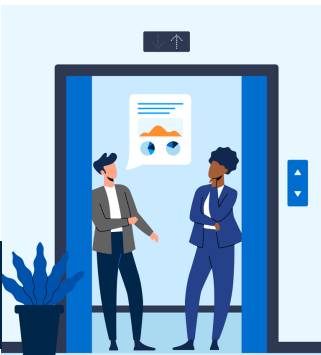
Everyone loves to listen to a good story, right?

Connect with your audience
Watch for feedback because different types of audiences will respond differently



Practice time!

- Get in a group of 2-3
- Go back to your worksheet
- Take 2 minutes to add more information and/or edit what you already have
- Put everything together into your elevator pitch – aim for 60 seconds, but 2 minutes is okay for research
- Each group member has 1-2 mins to present their pitch to group members
- When others are presenting, listen for a story and no jargon...do they end with a sentence that opens the door for further conversation?
- 60s per group member for feedback
- Re-group and edit your pitch based on feedback




Another round of practice but this time, focused on distilling your research

[Aurbach et al. 2018](#): Half-Life Your Message: A Quick, Flexible Tool for Message Discovery



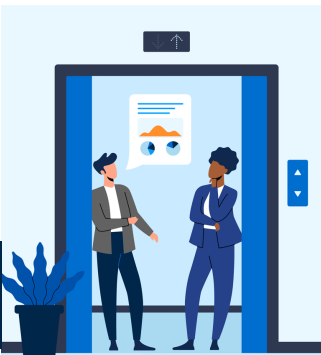
Half-Life Your Research Message

Half-Life Your Message



60 sec
30 sec
15 sec
(8 sec)

- Take 5 minutes to jot down some ideas
- Get together with a partner
- Stand up if you are able and follow the exercise: 60s, 30s, 15s, and 8s without a break
- Partner gives you feedback and then it's their turn



Concluding Remarks

- What worked well? Or not so well?
- Did you find the activity helpful?
- Remember, your audience is key – your pitch depends on this
 - Use the half-life your research message to help you distill down your research so that you can use this snapshot in your elevator pitch
- Practice makes perfect
 - Set up a practice time with Graduate Assistant Diana Fontaine (through Spring 2024): <https://calendly.com/fontained-fvw>
 - Or meet with a [Graduate Writing Consultant](#)

