

Creating Your Elevator Pitch

What is an “elevator pitch”?

Borrowed from business and networking tools, an “elevator pitch” is a short, pre-prepared speech that clearly and succinctly explains what your organization does, what its goals are, and how it provides service and value to others. It should be compelling, memorable, and short: **a good elevator pitch should last around 30 seconds, and definitely not longer than a minute.**

How do I create an elevator pitch?

You will probably vary your approach depending on who the speech is aimed at (your MLA probably does not want to hear the same speech a teacher does, and vice versa), but the steps remain the same.

1. **Identify your goal:** Start by thinking about the objective of your pitch. What point are you trying to make? What do you absolutely need to say? What audience are you saying it to?
2. **Explain what you do:** Start your pitch by describing what your organization does. Focus on the problems that you solve and how you help people. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value in what you do. Ask yourself this question as you start writing: what do you want your audience to remember most about you?

Keep in mind that your pitch should excite you first; after all, if you don't get excited about what you're saying, neither will your audience. Your pitch should bring a smile to your face and quicken your heartbeat. People may not remember everything that you say, but they will likely remember your enthusiasm.

3. **Communicate your uniqueness:** Identify what makes you, your organization, or your idea unique. You will want to communicate this after you've talked about what you do -- many similar services or ideas may already exist, so what is special about yours?
4. **Engage with a question:** After you have communicated your uniqueness, engage your audience in the conversation. Use open-ended questions that require more than a yes-or-no response. Additionally, make sure you are able to answer any questions your

audience might have.

5. **Put it all together:** When you've completed each section of your pitch, put it all together, then read it aloud. Time yourself, aiming for no more than 20-30 seconds - otherwise, you risk losing the audience's attention. Then, try to cut out anything that absolutely does not need to be there. Remember, the snappier the better!
6. **Practice, practice, practice:** How you say it is just as important as what you say. Smooth, natural delivery will make it sound more like a natural conversation, not a sales pitch. Make sure you are aware of your body language, which conveys as much to the listener as your words do.
7. **Tweak, tweak, tweak:** An elevator pitch is not a static speech. As you deliver it, you may find that you can think of better or different ways to make your point. Incorporate these! Change is important to ensure that your speech does not sound too formulaic or rehearsed.

(Adapted from: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/elevator-pitch.htm>)

Elevator Pitch -- The Value of a Library

If you are creating an elevator pitch promoting your library and its value and importance to the community, your pitch should answer the following questions:

1. Who are you? Why are you a credible voice on this issue?
2. What does your library do, and who benefits?
3. Why does it matter? What is the impact on your community?
4. (if applicable) What support do you need, and what will you do with that support?

TIP: Draw upon your own personal experience, and use local examples to help show the impact of libraries in your community.

(Adapted from the OLA Advocacy Toolkit 2019)

Other Resources

- [Five Reasons You Need an Elevator Pitch](#)
- [The 15-Minute Method to Writing an Unforgettable Elevator Speech](#)