

# THE ELEVATOR SPEECH

## Why Is Having an Elevator Speech So Important?

What if you were in an elevator with someone from an organization that's always interested you? You have a short time to introduce yourself, share your skills and qualifications, and express your interest without gushing or rambling. This 30-60 second professional description describes what you do and why someone should work with you.

Networking events, like conferences or meetings, require that you have a very short (30-60 seconds!) speech ready to go, one that sounds natural and spontaneous. The purpose is to quickly educate your audience on the product of YOU and generate enough interest to lead to further conversation and a possible interview. With a smooth elevator speech or professional introduction that's brief, genuine, and honest, you can set yourself apart from the rest of the job seekers in any context. How can you be ready for this kind of encounter? **Practice!**

## Essential Elements of a Powerful Elevator Speech

- **Concise.** Your speech should take no longer than 30-60 seconds, which is about 150-225 words. Consider:
  - **Who are you and what do you offer?**
  - **Why are you interested in the position or working with the particular company?**
  - **What are your unique qualifications?**
  - **What can you do for the employer?**
- **Clear.** Use language that everyone understands. Don't use fancy words that aren't part of your normal vocabulary. Choose words that are genuine and easily understood - and remembered.
- **Powerful.** Use words that are powerful and strong. Look for synonyms that strengthen your message!
- **Visual.** Use words that create a visual image in your listeners mind. This will make your message memorable.
- **Tell a Story.** A short story, that is. A good story is essentially this: someone with a problem either finds a solution or faces tragedy. Either type of story can be used to illuminate what you do.
- **Targeted.** A great elevator speech is aimed for a specific audience. If you have target audiences that are vastly different, you might want to have a unique speech for each.
- **Goal Oriented.** A quality elevator speech is designed with a specific outcome in mind. What is your desired outcome? You may have different speeches depending on different objectives; for instance, do you want to make a sale, gain a prospect, enlist support for an idea, or make an impression for a job?
- **Bait the Hook.** This important element snags your listener's interest and makes them want to know more.
- **Turn it around.** What are you hoping to gain from this conversation? Do you want to know more about the person you're meeting, the organization where they work, a job opening you've seen? Open the conversation in the other direction and be prepared to listen.

## How to Craft Your Amazing Elevator Speech

- **Determine your audience.** What event are you attending, and what kind of opportunity are you seeking? What do you most want people to know and remember about you?
- **Write down what you do.** Write it several different ways, at least 10-20 ways. This first step is for generating ideas. Describe everything you can about who you are and what you do, for work, school, family, or friends.
- **Craft a very short story** that illustrates what you do for people. Initially your story can be long and edited down later. Paint a picture with words.
- **Write down your objective or goal.** Do you want to make a sale, gain a prospect, enlist support for an idea, earn a referral, or something else?
- **Write 10-20 action statements.** This statement or question is designed to spur action associated with your goal.
- **Put the best pieces together.** It's likely you will write down several versions of this much tighter speech. Describe what you do and why people should want to do business with you, including elements from your story.
- **Record yourself.** Time for selfie mode! Take a video of yourself (not just audio) and then...
- **...Let it sit.** Come back to what you've written with fresh eyes and ears the next day or later on in the same day.
- **Highlight the good stuff.** Listen and read through what you've recorded and written. Then either highlight or circle the phrases that hook you with clear, powerful, and visual words.
- **Record again.**
- **Do a final edit, cutting as many unnecessary words as possible.** Rearrange words and phrases until it sounds just right. Again, the goal is 30-60 seconds maximum.
- **Dress Rehearsal.** Run it by as many people as you can. Get feedback from colleagues, classmates, clients you trust, friends, and family. Do they think this sounds like YOU? Would they describe you differently?
- **Done for now.** Take your final elevator speech and write it down. Memorize and practice it until it is easy to say naturally. Small gestures can help you memorize your speech and keep all the pieces in order.
- **Continue to improve.** Over time, consider phrases that could make your elevator speech clearer and more impactful. Keep testing it out. Every once in a while, you could benefit by starting from scratch because things always change: you, your business, your goals, and your clients' needs.

### SAMPLE FORMAT

1. **Introduction:** Hello, I'm Alex, a junior at Alaska Pacific University, and I'm looking for an internship in wildlife biology this summer.
2. **Your education and experience:** I have had a strong interest in polar bear research since I first enrolled in college and have participated in several experiential courses at APU, such as (XYZ). I've maintained a 3.6 GPA while also participating in extra-curricular activities, including (XYZ).
3. **What you're seeking:** I understand your organization offers research internships, and I'm very interested in learning more.
4. **Next steps:** Would you be able to introduce me to your internship coordinator? (Or) I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your career path and how I might explore careers within the profession of wildlife biology. Would you be open to setting up a meeting?