



# CAREER SERVICES / ELEVATOR PITCH

## 'Elevator Pitch' - The Origins

The elevator pitch is a term taken from the early days of the internet explosion when web development companies needed venture capital. Finance firms were swamped with applications for money and the companies that won the cash were often those with a simple pitch. The best were those that could explain a business proposition to the occupants of an elevator in the time it took them to ride to their floor. In other words, an elevator pitch that worked was able to describe and sell an idea in 30 seconds or less. *Today, an elevator pitch can be any kind of short pitch that sells an idea, promotes your business or markets you as an individual.*

What is your career story *right now*? You need to be able to say who you are, what you do or what you are interested in doing, and how you can be a resource to your listeners. A business card alone cannot explain your skills and value. If you are not able to speak it out loud in a short memorable way, people will not really know what you have to offer.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE:** Before writing any part of your elevator pitch, research your audience. You will be much more likely to succeed if your elevator pitch is clearly targeted at the individuals you are speaking to. Having a 'generic' elevator pitch is almost certain to fail. The audience you speak to can be as broad as a field (e.g. Environmental Sciences) or a specific employer (e.g. US Fish and Wildlife). You may need to have a few versions in order to adapt to the conversation or person in front of you!

**KNOW YOURSELF:** Before you can convince anyone of your proposition you need to know exactly what it is. You need to define precisely what you are offering, what problems you can solve and what benefits you bring to a prospective contact or employers.

Answer the following questions:

*What are your key strengths?*

*What adjectives come to mind to describe you?*

*What is it you are trying to 'sell' or let others know about you?*

*Why are you interested in the company or industry the person represents?*

**OUTLINE YOUR PITCH:** Start an outline of your material using bullet points. You do not need to add any detail at this stage; simply write a few notes to help remind you of what you really want to say. They don't need to be complete sentences.

You can use the following questions to start your outline:

*Who am I?*

*What do I offer?*

*What problem is solved?*

*What are the main contributions I can make?*

*What should the listener do as a result of hearing this?*

**FINALIZE YOUR PITCH:** Now that you have your outline of your material, you can finalize the pitch. The key to doing this is to expand on the notes you made by writing out each section more fully.

To help you do this, follow these guidelines:

1. Take each note you made and write a sentence about it.
2. Take your sentences and connect them together with additional phrases to make them flow.
3. Look at what you have written and change any long words or jargon into everyday language.
4. Go back through the re-written material and cut out unnecessary words.
5. Finalize your pitch by making sure it is no more than 20-30 seconds long.

**FOR CLASS or WORKSHOP**  
**WORKSHEET FOR ELEVATOR PITCH CREATION**

*What is your story RIGHT NOW?*

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

SELF ASSESS:

1. What are your key strengths?
2. What adjectives best describe you?
3. What interests you? What is your focus?

CRAFT IT:

Step 1 – *Who am I?*

Step 2 – *What do I offer? What problems do I solve?*

Step 3 – *What is the best impact I can make? Or what is my unique impact?*

Step 4 – *Call to action (specific!)*

PRACTICE IT!

Partner up, and take turns speaking/listening.

## ELEVATOR PITCH EXAMPLES

### Senior College Student

“My name is Sally Jones and I am finishing my degree in Sustainability Studies at Colorado Mountain College (WHO). I just finished an internship with CORE doing residential energy audits, and I really enjoy helping people learn how they can reduce their consumption of energy and create some savings for their families (DO/OFFER). I want to help people become a part of the solution when it comes to reducing our impact on the environment (IMPACT), and I’m looking for other opportunities to educate my community in this area (CALL to ACTION).”

### First Year College Student

“Hi, I am Tom Smith, and I’ve just started my college degree at Colorado Mountain College. (WHO) I’m not totally sure what I’d like to do in the future, but I really enjoy my psychology and communication classes; (DO/OFFER) it would be interesting to do work that helps others who are struggling or confused about life because I relate well to people and have helped friends who are feeling down (Impact). I hope to do some volunteering with youth next summer (Action).”

### Interior Designer

“My name is Linda Smith (WHO) and I design renovations in glass. I work with people who are renovating their bathrooms (DO/OFFER). I create shower enclosures, sinks, and backsplashes made entirely of glass (UNIQUE IMPACT). If you’re wondering what a glass sink looks like, I’d be happy to show you (ACTION).”

### Communications/New Media

“I’m a communications professional (WHO) with a knack for persuasive storytelling; my colleagues often compliment me for my thoughtful and engaging presentations (DO/OFFER). My approach is inspired by documentaries, and I want to help organizations express their missions in compelling and relatable ways (UNIQUE IMPACT). I’m looking for insight as to how I can best position myself for a role in production or videography at social impact start-up (ACTION). “