Creating Your Elevator Pitch

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What is an elevator pitch?
An elevator pitch is...

☐ An informative and concise description of your work

☐ A response to “What do you do at U of M?” or “What are you studying?” or “Tell me about yourself” or “Tell me about your research”

☐ 10-15 seconds: important detail (~ 25-30 words)

☐ 30 seconds: what you do, how, and why (~ 60 words)

☐ 90 seconds: the above + what sets you apart (~ 150 words)
A micro elevator pitch (9 seconds)

So Pamela, what do you do?

I work with international graduate students at the University of Michigan on really advanced English language for things like dissertation writing and conference presentations. (24 words)
Audience? Purpose?

Who is my intended audience?
What is my intended purpose?
A dramatization...

Before and after...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyxfERV5ttY

1:05  **Reuben:** Hey, Mr. CEO, good to see you, sir, good to see you.
     **CEO:** Hi, Reuben, right?
1:08  **Reuben:** Yes, Yeah.
     **CEO:** Oh, well, I’ve heard a lot of good things about you.
     **Reuben:** Okay, nice!
     **CEO:** So, what is it that you do then, actually?
1:13  **Reuben:** I’m a presenter and a comic; I host live events and I make online comedy videos. And I’m also co-founder of individualism.co.uk which is a leading men’s style blog. (29 words, spoken very quickly (10 seconds))
1:23  **CEO:** Well, excellent. Um, we’ve got a few events coming up
     **Reuben:** Okay
     **CEO:** And we could do with your services. You got a card?
     etc…
Where do we “give” our elevator pitches?

- Meetings: “Let’s have everyone introduce themselves.”
- Conferences
- Departmental events (talks, colloquia, etc.)
- Receptions
- Job fairs
- Any opportunity for networking
What are your elevator pitch goals?

What do you want your pitch to accomplish?
What are typical goals of an elevator pitch?

Some common goals:

☐ Continue the interaction beyond the initial 15-30 seconds

☐ Exchange contact information

☐ Leave a positive impression

☐ In sum: to interest someone, to continue interacting, and to establish your identity
Let’s try it

☐ You have 3 minutes to prepare. (What you do, how or why.)
☐ Then turn to a person you don’t know.
☐ Introduce yourselves by name & department
☐ One asks the other, “So, what are you studying?”
☐ Respond in 30 seconds or less.
☐ Ask your partner, “How about you?”
What did you find out about your partner?

- Name
- Department
Useful phrases to open & close

**Openers**
I’m in the ________ program because ____________________.
So, in our lab/research group, we work with ___________ called ____________ to ________________.
My research on ________ is to reveal/figure out/find out/design/model/discover ____________.
My goal is to ____________________.

**Closers (Results/Impact)**
This will result in ____________________.
I hope that _________________.
After my graduate work, ____________________.
Let’s try it again

☐ Pick an opening phrase.
☐ Then turn to a person you don’t know.
☐ Introduce yourselves by name & department
☐ One asks the other, “So, what do you do at Michigan?
☐ Use your selected opening phrase to get started on a SHORT pitch.
☐ Ask your partner, “How about you?”
What would make the pitches even better?
Additional Recommendations

- Jot down the points you want to highlight.
- Use words that a non-expert would know.
- Build on what your listener likely knows — having a sense of common ground is essential.
- Ask your listener questions to find out what their background knowledge & interest is.
- Use metaphors and analogies.
- Tell a story to tell your story.
- Explain the problem you are solving.
Let’s try it: new and improved (#2)

☐ Again, take 3 minutes to plan a revised elevator pitch using 1 or more of these suggestions.

☐ Find a new partner. Introduce yourselves to each other using your 30-second elevator pitches. Ask your partner at least 1 follow-up question.
“I’ve got an elevator pitch, an escalator pitch, and, just to be safe, a stairway pitch.”
Tailoring to Audience

Let’s imagine that your audience is someone who could hire you for a job you really want. How would elevator pitches be different for these two academic/job search audiences?

- Someone *in your broad discipline*, but not your specific research area (e.g. cancer research, but not genomic cancer research)
- Someone completely outside of any related fields
Avoid jargon.

- Technical terms may sound impressive, but they won't help anyone understand your research.
- The average intelligent person does not know the jargon.

Example

Research mindfulness-based cognitive therapy → I’m interested in helping people with autism succeed at work and in social settings.
Summary

Be prepared.

- Know your key points.
- Practice until smooth.

Know your audience: have several versions ready.

Know your goals.

- Share your research?
- Secure funding?
- Get a job or internship?
- Find a collaborator?
- Find an advisor?
- Find a mentor?
- Meet a new friend?
- Just network?
Useful resources

American Psychological Association advice to graduate students on creating elevator pitches

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi41U9ahyoE
Before and after elevator pitch with Vanessa Van Edwards: movement, hand gestures, story

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82unpCQRQHQ
Lowering your overall vocal tone in your elevator pitch by taking a big breath (also with Vanessa Van Edwards)

http://90secondthesis.rice.edu/resources/
Lots of winning Rice University elevator pitch contestants, slides, and advice

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N03L6OaxeE
TEDx Talk about turning around the elevator pitch--getting the other person to reveal lots about themselves, and then using what they’ve shared as openings to identify connections and bridges. Michelle Golden. “The Elevator Speech is out of order.”
Let’s pause to touch base about the English Language Institute (ELI).

What other English for Academic Purposes resources can the ELI offer you?
Academic and Professional Communication for Graduate Students at U-M
ELI’s range of academic & professional English courses

SPEAKING FLUENTLY (6)

WRITING (4)

PRONUNCIATION (3)

& LISTENING (1)

READING, VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR (2)

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LANGUAGE & CULTURE (2)
ELI Courses
- speaking, listening, & pronunciation
- writing, reading, & grammar
- first year through PhD contexts

ELI Clinics
- Speaking
- Writing
- GSI

ELI Conversation Circles
(conversational fluency)

http://lsa.umich.edu/eli
Academic Advising

- **Individual advising sessions**
  - 15-20 Minutes
  - Includes an informal needs assessment
- Students receive an ELI Advising Plan
  - Current and future course recommendations
  - Other resources (clinics, workshops, etc)
- Follow-up sessions encouraged
  - End of first Term
  - Anytime during time at UM
- Sign up: http://lsa.umich.edu/eli
Academic Advising

http://lsa.umich.edu/eli

The English Language Institute provides a full range of English for Academic Purposes courses and other types of language and academic support for international graduate students, scholars, researchers, staff, and post-docs at the University of Michigan. We also offer language and pedagogy courses for current and prospective international GSIs and ESL/EFL teacher preparation courses for graduates and undergraduates interested in teaching English in local communities or abroad.

Language Clinics

The English Language Institute offers several Language Clinics which provide international graduate students, GSIs, scholars, faculty, and staff with one-on-one language and academic support. Clinics are staffed by ELI lecturers or by GSIs working under close supervision of experienced faculty.

ELI Academic Advising

ELI faculty advisors are available to provide U-M graduate students with help selecting ELI courses and other language resources. If you are a current student, you can sign up by clicking on the button below or by emailing ELIadvisor@umich.edu or calling 734-764-2413.

Meet with an ELI Advisor

Your ELI Academic Advising Plan

Advising at the UM English Language Institute...
ELI on the Web

- [http://lsa.umich.edu/eli](http://lsa.umich.edu/eli)

ELI on Social Media

- Facebook: /umichenglishlanguageinstitute/
- Twitter: @umich_eli
ELI Contacts

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- GSI Advisor: Brenda Imber, prousimb@umich.edu
Thank you and good luck!