

Recording an elevator pitch – what? why?

The elevator door closes and standing next to you is a person who can change your life. There is only a short time to make a point with your captive audience before the door opens once more.

That's the metaphor behind the **elevator pitch**, a short speech aimed at explaining or persuading. The idea is popular in higher education, where students may be asked to produce several varieties with different goals:



- **Job** pitch – hoping to land an internship or long-term employment,
- **Funding** pitch – aimed at securing money for a project or business startup,
- **Recruitment** pitch – encouraging someone to join a group or company,
- **Research** pitch – designed to generate interest in a dissertation or other study.

An elevator encounter can sound a little far-fetched to students, but it's easy to imagine the need for a quick answer at a job fair, a party hosted by the friend of a friend, or a business networking meet-up. Some colleges even hold elevator pitch competitions.

Elements of an elevator pitch

A great deal of helpful information is available regarding how to craft various kinds of elevator pitches; a few examples are included at the end. Goals vary widely for the different flavors, but the general wisdom seems to boil down to a need for three key components:

1. **Introduction** – open with a **hook** that grabs the listener's attention. Share a fact that makes the listener think "Wow!" – or ask a question that leads creatively into the ...
2. **Message** – make it clear and uncluttered. Tell the listener how they will benefit. Framing the message in a story will make it easier for the listener to remember later on.
3. **Closing** – the pitch can't explain *everything*, so the objective is arranging a follow-up in the form of an interview or a phone call. There should be a clear take-

away or a call to action.

The elevator pitch as media

Students can turn a pitch into a media activity by capturing it with an audio recorder or video camera. At Notre Dame, two great recording spots are the [One Button Studio](#) and a [sound recording booth](#).

There are several ways this kind of recording can be useful: (1) **Practice** – turning in the file serves as evidence of rehearsing the pitch, which the instructor can simply check off or use to provide ... (2) **Feedback** – students can ask a peer or expert to provide formative feedback, or instructors can use it for grading in a situation where there isn't time to hear everyone's pitch; and (3) **Share** – students can upload the talk to SoundCloud or YouTube and share it in an ePortfolio or other personal website, where potential funders or employers can listen or watch it!

Making a recording is very different from performing live in the classroom or at a competition. Students should arrange make the pitch to a listener when they record it. For a class assignment they submit entire “takes,” rather than edited recordings.

Natural delivery takes practice

When viewing recordings, pitchers should listen to their voice and watch for body language. The pitch should be loud enough and clear, without mumbling and not too

fast. Don't overlook gestures and posture. The pitcher should make eye contact with the listener. Pitchers should come across as passionate about their subject and be personable: warm, but not too friendly. They should speak with confidence, but not descend into arrogance.

Being "professional" is hard to define, but it's part of delivery. Appropriate attire figures in, as does one's level of discourse. If my listener were an older manager, for example, I would use more formal language and avoid hipster slang. Last comes temperament.

The most common advice for preparing a pitch is to practice. A pitch should sound natural – not as if it were being recited from memory or read from a script. With enough practice the pitcher should have the confidence to make that happen.

Three kinds of pitches

- [The Perfect Elevator Pitch To Land A Job](#) (Forbes)
- [How to Create an Elevator Pitch That Will Get You Funded](#) (Entrepreneur)
- [Communication: Two minutes to impress](#) (Nature)

Teaching resources

- [How to design a digital media assignment](#)
- [Assignment](#) | [Rubric](#) | [Self-Critique](#) (Carol Johnson-Gerendas, TX Wesleyan)
- [High 5 Worksheet](#) (Connie Reimers-Hild, U of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- [Pitch contest info, with rubric](#) (U of No. Colorado)
- [Assignment](#) (U of Washington)
- [Remix project page](#) (Notre Dame)

Note: many sites point to a tool Harvard used to provide; it's no longer available.

Alternate views

- [Your elevator pitch needs an elevator pitch](#) (Tim David)
- [No one ever bought anything on an elevator](#) (Seth Godin)
- [The elevator speech is out of order](#) (Michelle Golden, TEDx)
- [6 Elevator Pitches for the 21st Century](#) (Daniel Pink)

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