How to Prepare an Elevator Pitch

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One of the most common questions asked is “What do you do?” As researchers, it is very important that when asked that question, we can explain what we do in a short period of time. This has been termed the “elevator pitch”, in other words, could you explain what you do in the time it takes to ride an elevator?

In a research setting, an elevator pitch introduces you as a researcher, your research questions, and the significance of your research. Because an elevator speech is short, typically 30 seconds to 2 minutes, it is a great way to introduce and share your research with others at formal networking events, conferences, casual conversations, or even during an actual elevator ride. Ultimately, your elevator speech should provide a 'hook' and make your listener want to know more about your research!

There are several basic questions your elevator pitch should answer:

1) Who are you? - Don’t forget to introduce yourself.
2) What is the topic of your research?
3) What is the problem, issue, or question that you are addressing in your research?
4) Why is that problem interesting and important? (i.e. So what?) – This part is incredibly important and will probably carry the weight of your elevator pitch.
5) How does your work connect with a broader disciplinary conversation about this topic/problem in your field, and what does it add to that conversation?

When delivering an elevator pitch there are several important considerations to keep in mind:

• Keep it simple and to the point. State your research topic, report your findings, and convey the significance of your work.
• Focus on your audience when delivering an elevator pitch. For example, you would likely tailor a message to a room full of 1st graders differently than a room full of museum-goers.
• Avoid jargon. Try to leave out technical or discipline-specific terminology. Similarly, be sure to define acronyms and use everyday examples or analogies to help your audience understand key concepts that may be unfamiliar to them.
• Practice. It’s a good idea to write out a draft first and read it out loud a few times to make sure it flows and is of appropriate length. To make your elevator pitch not sound robotic, however, it’s a good idea to memorize key points of your research rather than read a full script.
• Lastly, be enthusiastic! Recall what first sparked your interest in your research and be sure to convey that to your audience.

Sources
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https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/deconstructing-the-elevator-speech/