

Elevator Pitch Presentation

Purpose:

An elevator speech is a clear, brief message or “commercial” about your research. It communicates who you are and what you are doing in terms that a non-expert could easily understand. The goal of this type of session is to give students the ability to develop effective communication skills and recognize students who can present complicated information in understandable ways.

Elevator pitches typically last about 30 seconds, the time it takes people to ride from the top to the bottom of a building in an elevator. (The idea behind having an elevator speech is that you are prepared to share this information with anyone, at anytime, even in an elevator.) We are allowing up to 2 minutes for your presentation, so the time is a bit more. However, the purpose and value of the concept of the elevator pitch remain the same.

It is important to have your speech memorized and practiced; you want it to sound natural. Technical jargon will not help a non-expert understand what you are doing, and it will not help many of the people who evaluate funding and job opportunities see you as an asset.

Rules:

1. You may take up to 2 minutes to present your research. A moderator will cut you off once time runs out.
2. You are not allowed to use any visual aid. No PowerPoint slides, props, posters, or anything else that might help communicate an idea. Use only your words and body language.
3. Poems and singing are not allowed. In other words, only use prose.
4. If you plan on submitting an application to receive a research grant this year, submit an abstract to this event as well.

Tips:

1. You do not have much time to get your point across, so it helps to know your presentation quite well. Practice. Practice. Practice.
2. It helps to begin your presentation with a “hook,” a quick anecdote, question, or other attention-grabbing mechanism that motivates the problem your research solves or addresses. If your audience knows why they should care about what you are doing, they will be able to listen with greater interest.
3. Review past winners of the University’s 3 Minute Thesis® to get an idea of what a good, though slightly longer, elevator pitch looks like.