The Elevator Pitch: Presenting Your Research in Conversation

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What is an *Elevator Pitch* or *Research Spiel*?

- A concise statement of your research interests and experience to be shared *informally* and *orally* in various professional contexts.
  
  - A brief encounter with a scholar in your field at a conference
  
  - Introductions around a table at the beginning of meeting
  
  - Introduction to a guest speaker in the hallway right before his/her talk
  
  - Conversation at a reception for a speaker
  
  - An actual elevator ride with a search committee member
What is the goal of an elevator pitch?

- To create a memorable and positive impression
- To open the door to further conversation
Questions your elevator pitch should answer:

• What is the **topic** of your research?
• What is the **problem, issue, or question** that you are asking and addressing in your research?
• Why is that problem interesting and important? (i.e. **So what?**)
• 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?
Language:

– **key nouns**
  
  • offer topical touchstones that are accessible to wide range of educated people
  
  • avoid jargon if possible or deliver specialized terms using appositives

– **action verbs**
  
  • express relationships among these key nouns using action verbs
  
  • describe the *movement* of your work and the *activity* or *action* of your involvement
### Analysis:
- analyze
- define
- categorize
- classify
- compare
- contrast
- systematize

### Application:
- apply
- argue
- articulate
- conclude
- defend
- demonstrate
- differentiate
- employ
- establish
- extend
- hypothesize
- illustrate
- implement
- propose
- theorize

### Synthesis:
- combine
- construct
- create
- design
- formulate
- frame
- integrate
- merge
- project
- solve
- synthesize
- unite

### Evaluation:
- critique
- defend
- evaluate
- interpret
- justify
- reassess
- re-envision
Delivery:

– Eye contact--read your listener

– Enthusiasm

– Practice, practice, practice!
Practice, practice, practice!

For the evaluator:
• What words or phrases stuck out to you as the most important?
• What intrigued you?
• Were you confused at any point?
• What might the speaker have emphasized more/less?
• Did they respond appropriately to your verbal or physical cues?

For the speaker:
• Did you get all your key points across?
• Did you get asked what you expected to be asked?
• Were you able to remain “in the moment”?
The Interview Pitch

• Contexts
  – at a group conference interview
  – a one-on-one interview with an administrator

• Features
  – a concise statement that generates interest
  – a response to an actual question
  – not focused solely on your dissertation
The Cocktail Party Pitch

• Contexts
  – telling friends or family what you do
  – discussing your work at poster sessions with possible collaborators, peers, etc.
  – cocktail parties, receptions, lunch meetings, campus visit engagements

• Features
  – Conversational, an actual dialogue
  – Listen very carefully, and respond!
  – Seek connections between your research interests and your interlocutor’s interests
  – Ask questions
Additional Resources

- Career Center
- Writing Center
- English for Academic Purposes Program
- Cocktail Party! “Elevator Pitch Essentials: Giving your Research Spiel,” Monday, November 5th, 4:30-6:30PM