

Constructing an elevator pitch

Adapted from MIT Biological Engineering Communication Lab (source: <https://bit.ly/3kYrpBd>)

Identify Your Purpose

- An “elevator pitch” can be any verbal description of who you are, what you do, and why you do it, but in all scenarios you have one purpose: secure the interest of the listener. A successful pitch should draw them in to hear your whole story. It doesn’t matter if you are introducing a professor to your poster at a conference or just chatting with a friend. Your goal is to share your science in a way that your audience can access and get excited about.

Content

- First, select pitch content by answering questions like “what aspect of my work will be most exciting to my audience?” When preparing a pitch to be delivered formally to a group, choose an aspect of your big problem and an application or advantage of your new thing that will interest the majority of the audience. When giving a pitch in a personal conversation, your pitch should be tailor-made for the specific person.

General advice

- Keep it concise
- To maximize your audience engagement, your pitch should not be longer than about 20 seconds.
- Keep the sentence structure and words simple so that your delivery feels natural and your audience can follow the ideas you are presenting.
- To pare down your draft, cross out all the nonessential words until you feel you cannot cross out any more.
- Limit new terminology and amount of jargon in your pitch.
- Practice!

Annotated example:

Purpose: securing interest before you get into the details.

The one definition

“Gastrointestinal diseases, such as inflammatory bowel disease,”

The big problem, and specifics about this problem

“...are a huge problem because they impair the organ’s function locally and cause really severe inflammation of the tissue directly.”

Why that problem is a problem

“...And, so, you need to get local concentrations of drug to that tissue to tamp down the inflammation, but a lot of the symptoms that come along with the diseases really prevent being able to retain the drug locally to get sufficient absorption to treat the inflammation.”

What your work will do to affect that problem

If interest has been secure, go into details on how.

“...So the problem that we are addressing here is ensuring that the drug reaches the tissue and ensuring that happens as fast as possible so that the drug can start exerting its effect on the disease.”

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