

The 9 C's

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech that you use to spark interest in what your organization does. You can also use them to create interest in a project, idea, or product – or in yourself. A good elevator pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 90 seconds, hence the name.

They should be interesting, memorable, and succinct. They also need to explain what makes you – or your organization, product, or idea – unique. Ultimately, the goal of any elevator pitch is simple... to get the next meeting.

While there are many theories in how an elevator pitch should be constructed, it is important that your pitch address 5 critical questions in order to be complete and effective. These are collectively known as the 5 P's, and they are; Pain, Premise, Proof, People, and Purpose. Please see the 5 P's document for more detail.

You see, an elevator pitch can either open doors of opportunities to you or slam them against you. Your pitch should be a concise speech that is used to quickly define you, your profession, product, business, event and their value proposition. It is actually a script you develop and rehearse until you can deliver it in a conversational style. While the 5 P's tell the author what questions must be answered in an elevator pitch, there are nine rules of thumb that are necessary to creating a truly excellent elevator pitch. These are collectively referred to as the 9 C's:

The 9 C's

1. **Clear:** Use plain English as much as possible. Avoid acronyms and jargon. Never use a large word when a diminutive one will do.
2. **Concise:** You don't have a lot of time, so it's important to be as brief as possible so that you can get it all in.
3. **Credible:** People should believe you when you deliver your pitch. There are two complementary ways to accomplish this. First, you can explain why you're qualified. Second, you can sound like you know what you're talking about. This should be because you have practiced what you're going to say a lot **and** because you really do know what you're talking about.
4. **Consistent:** Have a message and stay on it. If you have numbers for something, use the same numbers throughout. Don't contradict yourself within your pitch. It's easier to do than you might think.
5. **Conversational:** You shouldn't sound like you're reciting the pitch, even though you probably are. Keep in mind that the elevator pitch is the beginning of a real conversation, one in which you hope to convince the listener that your idea is amazing and they want in on it.
6. **Conceptual:** Do not go into details in the elevator pitch. You don't have time. For instance, when discussing proof, if you've done market research you may know that 15% of college students will buy your product. You may also know a breakdown of that number based on other demographic information. The 15% is enough in most cases.
7. **Concrete:** Be as specific as you can. This sounds like the opposite of #6 above, but it's not really.
8. **Compelling:** You typically address this most in the pain section. You explain the pain, and part of that is convincing us that it's important to 'fix' the pain.
9. **Customized:** Inasmuch as possible, tailor your elevator pitch to your audience. In a contest setting this will not be easy. It might not even be possible. But remember, the skill of pitching, and perhaps even the pitch you're developing for this contest, may prove useful elsewhere. You might actually get on an elevator with Bill Gates, and wouldn't it be awesome if you had a fantastic opportunity for him?