

Quintessential Careers: Elevator Speech Do's and Don'ts

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Be sure to read our articles [The Elevator Speech is the Swiss Army Knife of Job-Search Tools](#) and [Fantastic Formulas for Composing Elevator Speeches](#).

Here are the keys for job-seekers to successfully developing and using an elevator speech in the job-search. Follow these simple rules and guidelines and you should achieve success with this important tool of job-hunting.

- **Do** make your Elevator Speech sound effortless, conversational, and natural.
- **Do** make it memorable and sincere. Open a window to your personality.
- **Do** write and rewrite your speech, sharpening its focus and eliminating unnecessary words and awkward constructions.
- **Do** avoid an Elevator Speech that will leave the listener mentally asking "So what?"
- **Do** consider including a compelling "hook," an intriguing aspect that will engage the listener, prompt him or her to ask questions, and keep the conversation going.
- **Don't** let your speech sound canned or stilted.
- **Do** practice your speech. Experts disagree about whether you should memorize it, but you should know your speech well enough so you express your key points without *sounding* as though the speech was memorized. Let it become an organic part of you. Many experts suggest practicing in front of mirrors and role-playing with friends. Certified Professional Virtual Assistant Jean Hanson advises practicing in the car on the way to networking events.
- **Don't** ramble. Familiarizing yourself as much as possible with your speech will help keep you from getting off track.
- **Do** be warm, friendly, confident, and enthusiastic. A smile is often the best way to show friendliness and enthusiasm, while a strong, firm voice the best way to express confidence.
- **Do** take it slowly. **Don't** rush through the speech, and do pause briefly between sentences. Breathe.
- **Do** project your passion for what you do.
- **Do** maintain eye contact with your listener.
- **Don't** get bogged down with industry jargon or acronyms that your listener may not comprehend.
- **Do** be prepared to wrap up earlier than you were planning if you see the listener's eyes glazing over or interest waning.
- **Don't** hesitate to develop different versions of your Elevator Speech for different situations and audiences.
- When developing an Elevator Speech for a specific employer you've targeted, **do** research the organization and incorporate that knowledge into your speech. See our [Guide to Researching Companies, Industries, and Countries](#).
- If you're cold-calling a hiring manager and get his or her voicemail **don't** be afraid to leave your Elevator Speech as a voice message. You may be even more successful getting action from the speech than if you had talked to the manager personally.
- **Do** incorporate examples and stories to help support your points. Provide examples of successful outcomes of deploying your skills. Stories make your speech memorable.
- **Don't** focus just on yourself, an approach that will almost assure a "so what?" reaction.
- **Do** focus on how you can benefit employers and help them solve their problems. Remember as you deliver your Elevator Speech that the listener may be mentally asking, "What's in it for me (or my company)?" [Author Carole Kanchier](#) especially suggests that your benefits include how you can save an employer time and money, help people feel good, or expand markets.
- **Do** use concrete, listener-friendly language, but at the same time, **don't** be afraid to paint vivid word pictures.
- **Don't** forget to include your competitive advantage also known as your [Unique Selling Proposition \(USP\)](#); in other words, how you can perform better than anyone else.
- **Do** end with an action request, such as asking for a business card or interview appointment.
- **Don't** forget to update your speech as your situation changes.
- If you are uncomfortable with the kind of speaking that the Elevator Speech entails, **do** consider joining a group such as [Toastmasters](#) to boost your confidence.