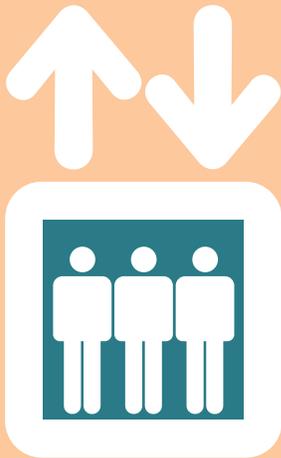




What is an elevator pitch and why do I need one?

An elevator pitch is a brief (think 30 seconds!) way of introducing yourself, getting across a key point or two, and making a connection with someone. It's called an elevator pitch because it takes roughly the amount of time you'd spend riding an elevator with someone. If you happen to bump into someone you've been dying to meet in an elevator, how will you introduce yourself, get your point across, and ask to stay connected—all before that person gets off the elevator!



Elevator pitches are handy to have in mind any time you're at an event where you might meet prospective job or networking connections.

How to create an elevator pitch.

As with most aspects of career planning, reflection is a critical part of creating an effective elevator pitch. To introduce yourself, you need to know yourself and be able to talk about yourself. The following components are important parts of a good elevator pitch.

1. Who am I?

Write a brief list of ways you describe yourself. Try to create a tailored list, appropriate to the audience you expect to be addressing. For example, in a professional networking situation, you might not include items such as your passion for baking or the fact that you have five younger siblings. Rather, you would focus on items such as your (proposed) concentration at Princeton, co-curricular activities you participate in, your hometown, etc. Examples:

My name is Terry Tiger. I'm a sophomore from Reno, Nevada, planning to concentrate in English at Princeton. I'm also an opinions editor for the Daily Princetonian.

I'm Pat Prince. I'm a junior at Princeton, concentrating in electrical engineering. I'm also a captain on the basketball team.

2. What do I do?

This is the part where you get to focus on an item or two (remember—you only have 30 seconds) that you want the person to remember. What are the skills or experiences you have that drive your career focus? How can you make a connection with the person that will help them understand what your career goals and priorities are? Specific items to address might include:

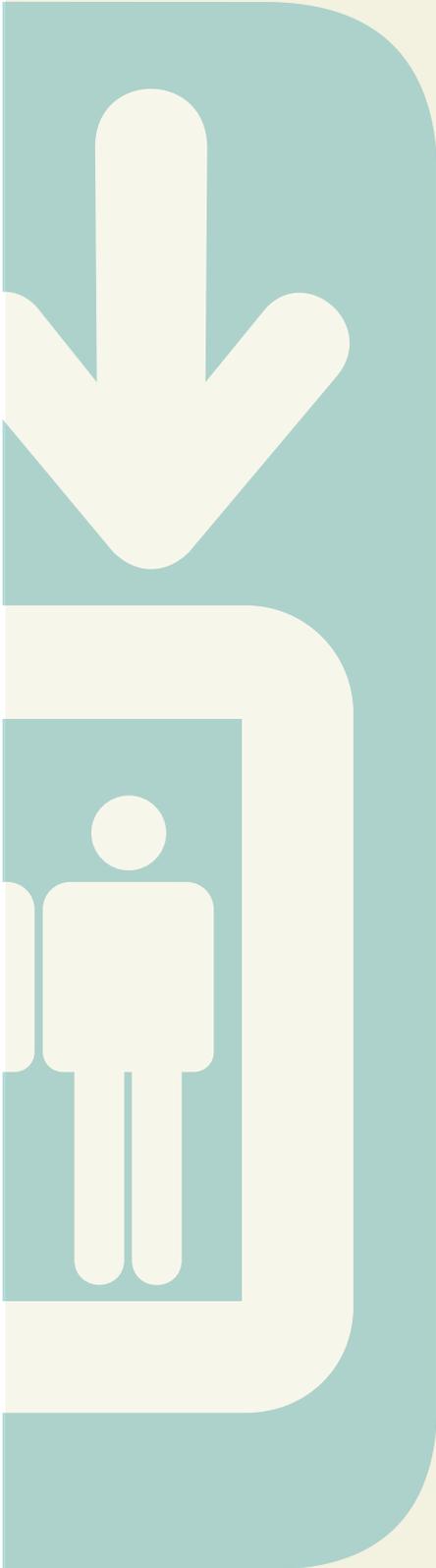
Skills: What skills will you bring to a job or internship, and how did you gain them?

Values/passion: What do you really care about related to your career goals? What drives your interests?

Examples:

Last summer, I interned for a nonprofit organization focused on providing resources to people with food insecurity. I created a database to inventory the supplies in our food pantry, and did outreach at local homeless shelters. I learned that I want to pursue a career path that will help ensure that people in underserved communities have access to the resources they need.

My coursework in economics has helped me realize that I am deeply curious about how markets work, and how investors make decisions. I have created a mock portfolio using a stock simulator, and have managed to realize a 10% increase in my investments over the past year.



3. What's my ask?

It's important to end by asking a question. The question might be as simple as a request for advice or sharing information. It might also include a request to keep connected. Sometimes it's helpful to include context on why you attended this event. Examples:

I'm at the career fair because I'm hoping to find a summer internship in data science. Can you tell me whether your organization has any internships like this, and how I might go about applying?

I came to this networking event to learn from alumni about how they navigated their career paths. Could you tell me about how you decided to pursue a career as a social worker?

I really appreciated your presentation about how your research is contributing to drugs effective in cancer treatment. I know there's a long line of people waiting to talk with you. Would you mind if I follow up with an email to ask you for your advice on how I might find a lab to conduct summer research?

Tips:

Keep it brief—remember, you've just got a few seconds to deliver your message. There will be time for sharing more information when you follow up.

Target your pitch to the event you're attending: if you're attending an event with all Princeton alums, you can focus more on Princeton activities and jargon. If you're meeting with hiring managers at a career fair, you might need to decode some of the Princeton-specific language.

Practice: It will probably feel awkward the first few times you introduce yourself this way. The only way to get better and to feel more comfortable is to practice!

Have an ask: Always give the person you're talking with a way to be helpful. Whether it's through sharing information or making a professional contact, let them know how they can help you.

Follow up: Use email or LinkedIn to follow up. Remind the person of the context in which you met, thank them for speaking with you, and find a way to continue the conversation.