What is an elevator pitch?

If you’re looking for a job, one of the first tasks on your to-do list should be crafting an ideal “elevator pitch.” It’s the 30-second speech that summarizes who you are, what you do and why you’d be a perfect candidate. You should be able to reel off your elevator pitch at any time, from a job interview to a cocktail party conversation with someone who might be able to help you land a position. But condensing many years of your academic and professional accomplishments into a 30-second statement that packs a punch can feel challenging. A good pitch should answer three questions: **Who are you? What do you do? What are you looking for?**

General tips and strategies

1. **Clarify your job target.** So when you begin putting an elevator pitch together, nail down the best way to describe the type of job you’re seeking. Until you can clearly explain the type of position you want, nobody can help you find it or hire you to do it.

2. **Put it on paper.** Write down everything you’d want a prospective employer to know about your skills, accomplishments and work experiences that are relevant to your target position. Keep editing until you’ve got the speech down to a few key bullet points or sentences. Your goal is to interest the listener in learning more, not to tell your whole life story.

3. **Tailor the pitch to them, not you.** It’s important to remember that the people listening to your speech will have their antennas tuned to WIFM (What’s in it for me?) So be sure to focus your message on their needs.

4. **Eliminate industry jargon.** You need to make your pitch easy for anyone to understand, so avoid using acronyms and tech-speak that the average person or job interviewer might not understand. The last thing you want to do is make your listener feel stupid or uninformed.

5. **Read your pitch out loud.** If you’re not careful, your elevator pitch can come off sounding more like an infomercial than a conversation.

6. **Practice, practice, practice.** Rehearse your pitch in front of a mirror or use the recording capabilities of your computer or phone, so you can see and hear how you sound.

7. **End with a call to action.** A future meeting or a phone call to continue the conversation.

**An Example:** “Hi, I am Sam Jones. I am an accountant with 2 years of experience in the insurance industry and I’m looking for opportunities in the Chicago area with both insurance and finance companies.” That speech would take about 15 seconds. Sam would then want to use his next 15 seconds to add details about his unique selling proposition, special skills and specific ways he could help a potential employer.