



# Crafting an Elevator Speech

## Minnesota Literacy Council AmeriCorps\*VISTA

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**Definition:** An elevator speech/pitch is a brief summary that succinctly defines a product, service, or organization and its value. The name comes from the idea that this summary should be delivered in the time span of a typical elevator ride—approximately 30 seconds to 3 minutes.

**Components & Tips:** Elevator speeches can vary a lot depending on the goal, audience, and circumstances but they should all contain the following elements.

- **Pertinent Facts**—The five W’s: who, what, where, why, how
- **Sparkle**—What makes your organization/service/product compelling or unique
- **Impact**—Statistics and stories that show results
- **Simplicity**—Jargon-free language that anyone can understand
- **Passion**—Show that you care about what you’re pitching
- **Flexibility**—Use a framework but adjust your speech to your audience
- **Preparation**—Practice your speech and ask for feedback

**Crafting the Pitch:** Answering the following questions will help you craft your own speech.

1. What are you trying to achieve? (i.e. recruit volunteers/clients, build new partnerships, inform others about your organization)
2. Who is your audience? (i.e. potential volunteers/clients, area schools/businesses, community members)
3. What is your position and your organization?
4. Why does your organization do what it does? (i.e. what need does it fill and why is this important to your audience?)

5. Where is your organization located? What population does it serve?
  
6. What does your organization do?
  
7. What makes your organization unique? What benefit do you deliver?
  
8. How does your organization do what it does?
  
9. Why are you passionate about this subject?
  
10. What is your “ask”? (i.e. How can people get involved or what could you do with additional support?)

**3-30-3 Exercise:** We can usually find plenty of things to say about what we do or who we work for. The hard part can be editing down our speeches, which is where the 3-30-3 exercise comes in. This exercise asks you to craft a three minute speech, a thirty second speech, and a three second speech. Give it a try!

**1. Say it in three minutes:** (Provides a more thorough explanation and includes impact stories)

**Example:** My name is Krista and I am an AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteer coordinator for the East Side Learning Center, a children’s literacy nonprofit in St. Paul. 75% of kids who don’t read at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade continue to struggle in school and beyond. An estimated 6,000 children in St. Paul need extra reading support but many families can’t afford private tutors. The ESLC provides free one-on-one tutoring in reading for low-income Kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade children who don’t read at grade level. Each child in our program receives personalized lesson plans written for them by licensed teachers and tutoring three to four days per week with a trained volunteer or professional tutor. With the help of 220 volunteers we served 214 children at three school sites last year, providing over 12,000 hours of tutoring! I love seeing the kids in our program discover a passion for reading. One boy in our program really struggled with reading but last spring, thanks to the support of his tutors, he is now reading beyond grade level and enjoys bringing books home! The ESLC has expanded to five schools this year but in order to continue changing children’s lives, we are looking for more volunteers. Have you ever considered tutoring?

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**2. Say it in thirty seconds:** (Provides a succinct overview with a hook to spur further conversation)

**Example:** I'm an AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteer coordinator for a children's literacy nonprofit in St. Paul. An estimated 6,000 children in St. Paul need extra reading support but many families can't afford private tutors. The East Side Learning Center provides free one-on-one tutoring in reading for low-income Kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade children who don't read at grade level. Each child in our program receives personalized lesson plans written for them by licensed teachers and tutoring three to four days per week with a trained volunteer or professional tutor. Last year we provided over 12,000 hours of tutoring to 214 children at three school sites with the help of 220 volunteers! Here's my card. If you'd like to see what we do, check out our website.

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**3. Say it in three seconds:** (An interesting phrase or short sentence that captures what you do)

**Example:** The East Side Learning Center changes children's lives one book at a time.

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**Resources:**

- <http://www.nonprofitcms.org/2011/01/building-a-good-elevator-pitch-for-your-nonprofit/>
- <http://www.philanthropyjournal.org/resources/marketingcommunications/developing-elevator-speech>
- [http://www.businessweek.com/careers/content/jun2007/ca20070618\\_134959.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/careers/content/jun2007/ca20070618_134959.htm)
- <http://www.buzzuka.com/>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator\\_pitch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator_pitch)