

THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Imagine you need money to launch your new teaching tool: a software program that helps teachers grade papers quickly. One day, you find yourself in an elevator with one of the wealthiest investors in your hometown. You have only the time in the elevator to share your idea and catch the interest of the investor. What do you tell the investor about your idea in 30 seconds?

As a Business English teacher, you help your students acquire the language skills necessary to function in the business world. It is equally important to help your students recognize the cultural norms and standards of communication they may encounter in the business world. The activity for this week gives students an opportunity to write and practice an elevator pitch, a technique frequently used in business and entrepreneurship situations. The elevator pitch is used to briefly introduce a business, a product, or an idea to a group of colleagues or potential investors. Elevator pitches are very short, and must present important information quickly and effectively.

LEVEL

Advanced

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Writing

GOALS

During this activity, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify the key components of an elevator pitch.
- Apply the specifics of an elevator pitch to a product or idea.

MATERIALS

- Paper and pencils
- Elevator Pitch Example (see Appendix A)
- Elevator Pitch Activity (see Appendix B)

PREPARATION

- Make copies for all students of the Elevator Pitch Example in Appendix A.
- Print and make copies for each student of the Elevator Pitch Activity in Appendix B.

PROCEDURE

1. Begin class by telling students, “Today we are going to discuss one of the most effective ways to present a new business idea or product to colleagues or investors. This technique is called the elevator pitch.”
2. Ask students what an elevator pitch might be and why it is called an elevator pitch. Give them 2-3 minutes to think and to discuss with classmates sitting nearby. After they discuss, ask students to share their ideas.
3. Next, hand out copies of the of the Elevator Pitch Example. Give students a few minutes to read through the example pitch.
4. While students read, write the following components of an elevator pitch on the board:
 - Who I am
 - Why I am here
 - What problem I am solving
 - What solution I offer
 - Why my solution is competitive

5. Present the components of the elevator pitch you wrote on the board. Explain that the components are not in any particular order because elevator pitches can be organized in different ways based on the purpose of the pitch and the audience (who is hearing the message).
6. Put students into groups of three based on the alphabetical order of their last names. For example, the first three students in alphabetical order will work together, the next three will work together, etc.
7. Ask groups to review the example elevator pitch together. Ask them to find the elevator pitch components from the board in the example. For example, where does the speaker explain who he or she is? What is the problem being addressed? Give students about 5-10 minutes for this part of the activity.
8. After groups have identified the components of the sample elevator pitch, review the answers as a large group.
9. Explain that now students will work in groups to write an elevator pitch for a new product their company is promoting.
 - a. Hand out a copy of the Elevator Pitch Activity to each group.
 - b. Review the activity as a class, and answer any questions students might have before beginning.
 - c. Tell students they have 20 minutes to work in groups to write their elevator pitch.
10. Have students submit their elevator pitches before leaving class, and then assess the pitches based on components of an elevator pitch.

VARIATIONS

An alternative to this activity is to have students work individually to write an elevator pitch on a product or idea they have researched in class. Students could then present their elevator pitch to classmates.

EXTENSIONS

The activity could be extended so that the groups work together to present their elevator pitches to the class. Each group could practice by having each member present the pitch to the other two group members. After practicing, the group decides which member will present the pitch to the entire class.

Extend the activity into another lesson where the focus is on presenting elevator pitches. Students could begin by practicing their own pitches or the example pitch used at the beginning of the activity.

APPENDIX A

THE SMITH PATIENT LIFT – ELEVATOR PITCH EXAMPLE

Good morning. My name is John Smith, and I'm here to discuss a new investment opportunity with you.

Did you know that each year, 20,000 patient-care workers such as nurses and health aides experience back injuries while working? We solve that problem with the Smith Patient Lift.

Hospitals have several options to move bed-ridden patients – from automatic lifts attached to ceilings to teams of caregivers that lift and move patients manually. But caregivers helping patients in their own homes don't have those options. The options available to hospitals are difficult to use, expensive to install, and don't fit inside most homes.

Don and Kelly Smith care for elderly patients in their homes in Jackson, and they needed a better solution for moving patients, so they built and patented the Smith Patient Lift. It's an automated lift device that attaches directly to a patient's bed. This lift allows a single caregiver to lift and move a patient safely without causing further injuries to the patients or caregivers.

With over 12 million Americans receiving home care, we plan to generate over \$10 million in sales by year 5. We have an experienced team that includes experts in medical equipment sales. We are seeking a \$500,000 investment and would like to meet with you to discuss this opportunity. Can we get on your schedule?

APPENDIX B

Elevator Pitch Activity

Imagine that you are looking for investors for a new product that your company has just developed. The product is called a Cronut, and the specifics are listed below. Read through the specifics, and working with your group, write an elevator pitch to present this product to investors. Remember to include the main components of a well-written elevator pitch and keep the pitch to fewer than 200 words.

New Product: Cronut

- Pastry that combines a donut and a croissant
- Low cost to-go breakfast/snack product
- Combines the lightness of a croissant pastry with the sweetness of a donut
- Can be purchased fresh at local bakeries or packaged in supermarkets
- Fits in with existing culture of buying food and taking it to go
- Well-made pastries using high-quality ingredients are difficult to find on most supermarket shelves
- Brings together a classic American pastry with a classic French pastry into an innovative new product loved by a large swath of potential customers

Elevator Pitch Components

- Who I am
- Why I am here
- What problem I am solving
- What solution I offer
- Why my solution is competitive