

Succeeding in Academia – Presentation and Public Speaking Skills

COLLEGE of
AGRICULTURE and
APPLIED SCIENCES
UtahStateUniversity



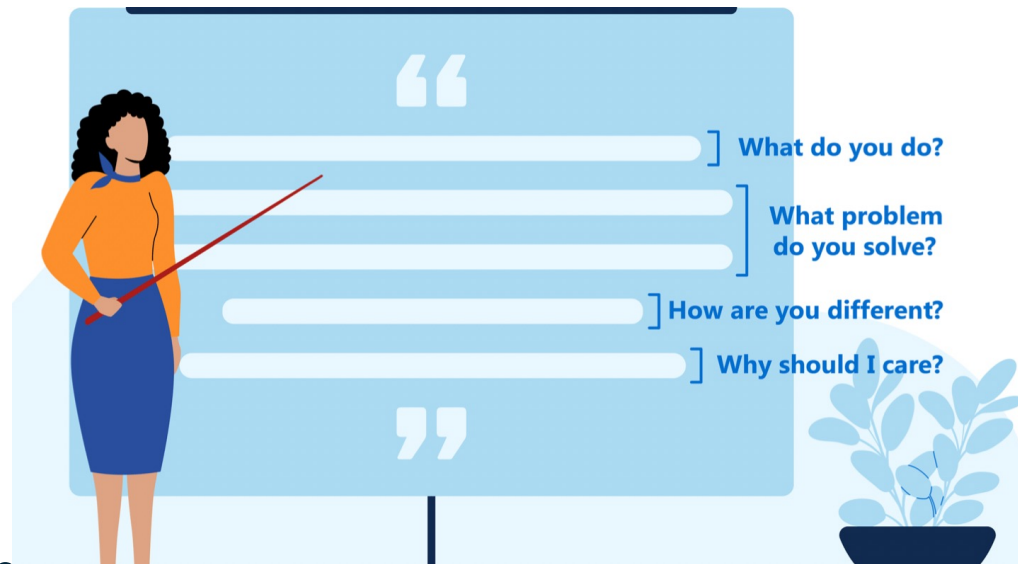


Today

- Academics **is** public speaking
- Academic conferences or seminars
 - Understand your audience
 - Presentation to do's
 - Presentation do not's
 - Don't assume they know
- Effectively communicating research value
 - The 60-second research "elevator pitch"
- Resources

Academics is Public Speaking

- Presenting research
 - Conferences and seminars
- Teaching
 - University and public audiences
- Learn to communicate effectively about...
 - Yourself, your expertise and your research programs
 - The value or solutions your research program provides



Academic Conferences & Seminars

- **Understand what your audience cares about**
- You are selling the audience on your research idea(s)
 - You can't sell them on it without understanding what they care about
 - What is interesting or convincing to you may not be to others
- You must convince your audience that what you have to say is relevant/important to them
 - Your presentation is about them – What they want, think, did, or may do
 - Its not about you – what you wanted, did, or thought
- People like to feel needed and part of the conversation



Academic Conferences: To Do's

- Look at the audience and talk to them
 - Don't read off your notes or read the screen
- Speak loud enough that the entire room can hear you
- Speak slow enough that your audience can process what you say
 - If you can't speak slowly due to amount of material, reduce the material
- Use common language that can be understood by all
 - If you must use jargon, define or explain
- Move naturally, as if in a conversation (move hands)
- Take ownership of the room, its your talk
- Use graphics to illustrate points if possible



Academic Conferences: Do Not's

- Do not start with an apology
- Do not pace around the room
- Do not stand in front of your slides
- Don't overcrowd slides
- Don't place anything on the slides the audience can't read
- Don't display irrelevant numbers on tables
- Don't try to show how hard you worked
 - Boring, and doesn't add or help
- Don't get defensive
 - This is about the research, not you...



Academic Conferences

- **Don't assume they know....**
 - Grad students and early career faculty often greatly overestimate what the audience knows and how much information they can absorb
- Much of what seems obvious to you in the middle or end of your project is not obvious to your audience and needs to be explained
- You must give people the information they need to understand the results you will show them, and to see why the results matter
- People must feel they understand your work well enough to evaluate it
 - They will not buy something if they feel they can't evaluate it



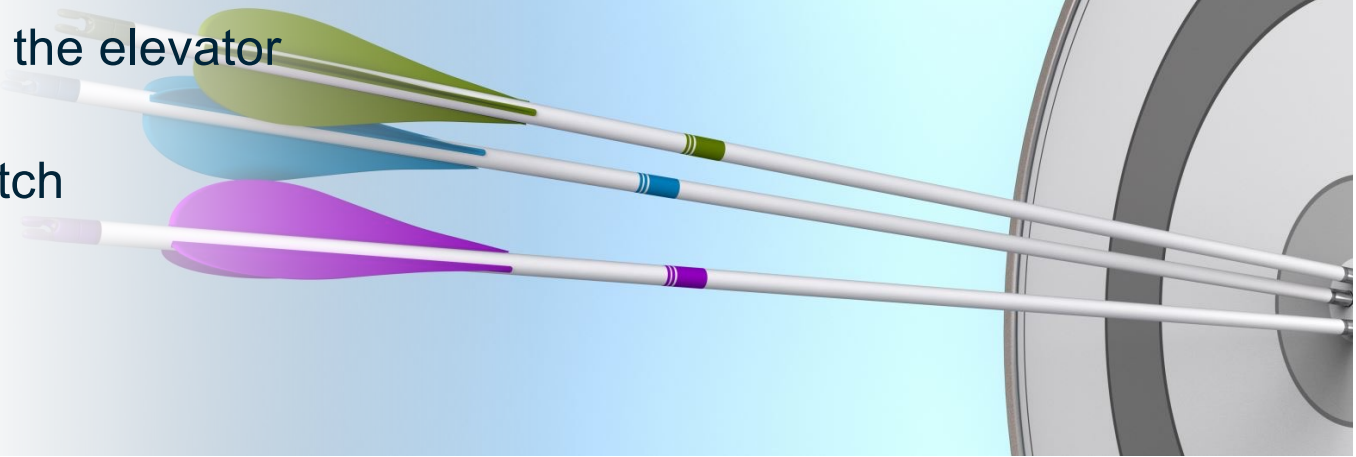
Academic Conferences

- Don't worry about making mistakes or looking silly
 - If you make a mistake, correct it and move on
- Practice will limit mistakes and show your audience you aren't wasting their time
- Start your talk strong with an intriguing question or statement – hook
- Keep stories and explanations short
- Stay within the time given
- Close with a compelling statement, something you want the audience to do, think or feel



Communicating Research Value

- The 60 second “Elevator Speech or Pitch”
 - Effective and easy communication tool
- What is an elevator pitch?
- What is the goal of an elevator pitch?
- What questions should the elevator pitch answer?
- Creating an elevator pitch
- Delivering the pitch



What is an Elevator Pitch?

- A concise statement (2-3 sentences) about your research interests and experience/expertise to be shared informally in various professional contexts
- When should one be used?
 - A brief discussion with a scholar in your field at a conference
 - Introductions around a table at the start of a meeting
 - Introduction to a guest speaker in the hallway before his/her talk
 - Conversation at a reception or conference for a guest speaker
 - An actual elevator ride or hallway discussion with a search committee member





What is the Goal of an Elevator Pitch?

- At a minimum....
 - To create a memorable and positive impression
 - To open the door to further conversation

You are essentially marketing yourself and your research



What Questions Should the Elevator Pitch Answer?

- What is the topic of your research?
- What is the problem, issue, or question that you are asking and addressing in your research?
- Why is that problem/interesting and important? (So what?)
- How does your work connect with the broader disciplinary conversation about this topic/problem in your field, and what does it add to that conversation?





Creating an Elevator Pitch

- Identify the audience (What is important to them? What is their goal in speaking with you?)
- Define the question or topic you will answer
- Start with an action phrase or hook
- State who you are in relation to the topic/question
- Share a few highlights, a story, or additional details on the topic/question
- Share the solution and the value/benefit

Language Use

- Key nouns
 - Offer topical touchstones that are accessible to wide range of educated people
 - Avoid jargon, if possible
 - To discuss specialty terms, use common nouns/pronouns
 - Turn “heterogeneous” into “different” or “homogeneous” into “similar”
- Action verbs
 - Express relationships among these key nouns using action verbs
 - Describe the movement of your work and the activity or action of your involvement

“I....” (action words)

Analysis:	Application:	Synthesis:	Evaluation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyze• define• categorize• classify• compare• contrast• systematize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• apply• argue• articulate• conclude• defend• demonstrate• differentiate• employ• establish• extend• hypothesize• illustrate• implement• propose• theorize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• combine• construct• create• design• formulate• frame• integrate• merge• project• solve• synthesize• unite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• critique• defend• evaluate• interpret• justify• reassess• re-envision



Example

Data-Focused Elevator Pitch

Problem • The average home wastes half of the energy that flows through it.

For context, the amount of energy wasted in just one day by California and Texas alone equates to how much was wasted in the 2010 BP Oil Spill.

Solution • NRGsaver has helped over 3,000 people save money on their utility bills, reduce their carbon footprint, and make the world a healthier place.

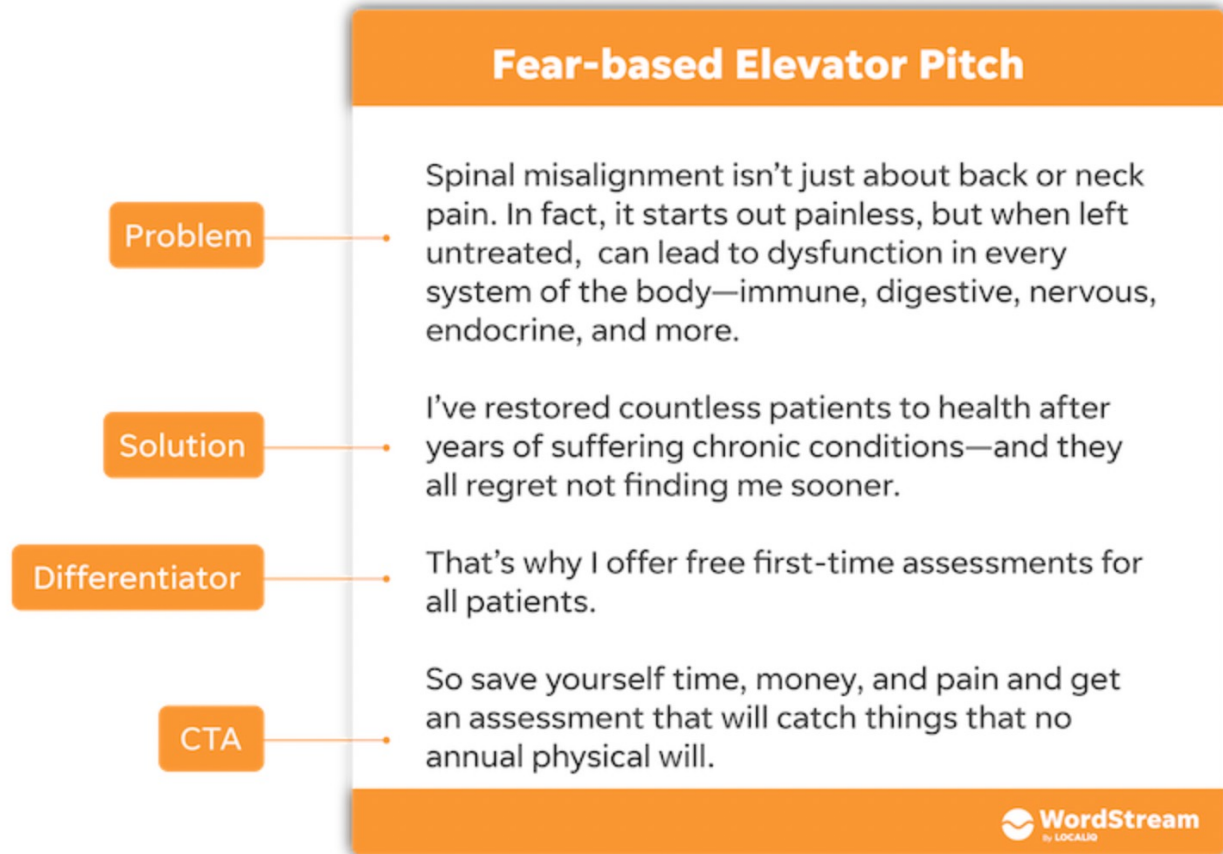
Differentiator • By incorporating your unique lifestyle and budget into our assessments and then providing 24/7 monitoring, our clients save, on average, \$3,000 more per year than those who use other services.

CTA • So my only question for you is, what are you going to do with that \$3,000? That's a nice vacation...

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Example



Academic Example

Do you know that 32 million Americans are taking statins for their high cholesterol? While statins have been shown to improve the heart function by reducing blood cholesterol levels, one of the major side effects associated with long-term use of statin is the development of muscle pain. My research focuses separating the cellular pathways leading to the beneficial effects and muscle toxicity mediated by statins in order to identify new drug molecule(s) that only activate the pathway good for the heart. Using various cell-based assays, we have identified a drug combination that mimics the good effects of statins but are devoid of the muscle toxicity associated with their used.



Draft and Practice

- Write an elevator pitch for a current paper or research topic
- Remember to...
 - Define the problem – hook
 - Include what makes you qualified
 - Explain your program's solution
 - Share the benefit/value

Basic Elevator Pitch Template #1

When I first started [your trade], I found a common issue: People needed [solution].

For [time period], I've been [specializing/providing] just that [state how]. I also [differentiator/advantage].

With this [2-3 adjectives to sum up the above], my customers not only [benefit], but they also [benefit].

[CTA]

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Delivering the Pitch....

- Make eye contact
- Demonstrate enthusiasm
- Don't get distracted
- Have your pitch down cold....

A good elevator pitch is...

Short



30-45 seconds
or 75-100 words

Personalized



Catered to what is most
important to the audience

Interesting



Storytelling, emotion, or
compelling data

Confident



But not arrogant!

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Practice and Feedback



Share your pitch with someone else?



As them to describe...

What words or phrases that stuck out as most important?

What was intriguing?

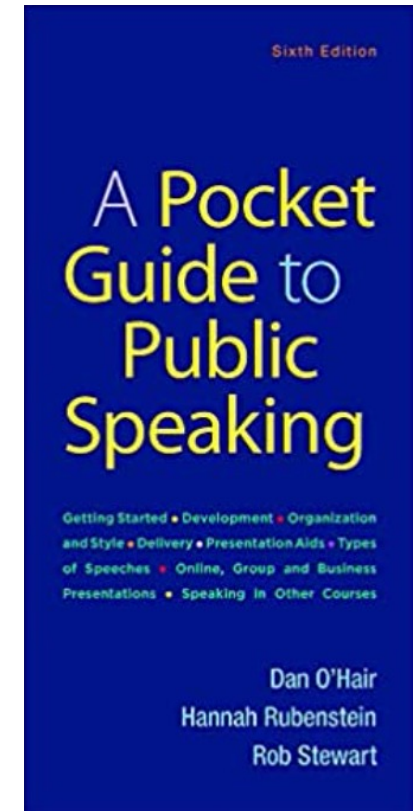
Were they confused at any point?

What should be emphasized more/less?



Book Resources

- A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking by Dan O'Hair et al. (2018)
- TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking by Chris Anderson (2017)
- An Essential Guide to Public Speaking by Quentin Schultze (2020)



Public Speaking Courses

- Chris Anderson (TED talks) at: <https://acumenacademy.org/course/chris-anderson-on-public-speaking/>
- Dale Carnegie at: <https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en/presentation-skills-public-speaking-training>



Other Resources

- Toastmasters International at <http://www.toastmasters.org/>
- Amherst College information at <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter/public-speaking/resources-for-public-speaking>
- Speaker hub at <https://speakerhub.com/skillcamp/8-resources-help-improve-your-public-speaking-skill>
- Santa Clara University information at <https://www.scu.edu/provost/writingcenter/resources/public-speaking-resources/>
- Harvard information at https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/10-tips-for-improving-your-public-speaking-skills/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIgOq3r6Xi-wIV9wWtBh06UwpmEAMYASAAEgKIE_D_BwE



Next

- May 22: Selecting and Applying for Grant Funding
- June 5: Finding and Collecting Data



Questions?

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