



COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

Developing Your Personal Narrative & Elevator Pitch

What is a Personal Narrative?

A personal narrative is all about who you are and how you want to convey your unique traits and strengths to others. It can include your experiences, skills, interests, passions, values, and beliefs.

What is an Elevator Pitch?

An elevator pitch is similar to a shortened personal narrative. It serves to provide a brief glimpse of who you are, and where your professional and personal aspirations lie. It is also often tailored to best fit the situation in which it is delivered - whether it be during an interview, networking event, or simply a casual conversation.

How do I get started?

First, try answering some of these questions below:

Who are you?

- Describe your background.
- Explain your major/minor?
- What is the College of Human Ecology?
- What are you doing? (ex: what you are studying or what you are working on currently?) What are your passions and interests?
- What skills do you have?
- What are your values?
- Is there a story or reason behind why you are pursuing what you are?
- Do you have any unique experiences or traits?
- What impact have you made, or look forward to making?

Who is your audience?

- What are you specifically looking for?
- What can you provide for others?
- What's unique about what you offer and your skill set?

What's Next?

After answering these questions, compile the answers into a more cohesive piece. Try to narrow down answers to effectively capture your goals and how they may relate to whom you are communicating. For an elevator pitch or a quick "tell me about yourself," pick and choose what's most appropriate and unique. A good stylistic choice is to start with your specific background and credentials, and then broaden your focus to a bigger goal and overall driving force for your work.

Example:

I'm currently a senior within Cornell University's Design and Environmental Analysis major. In the past, I've held positions as a product design intern and an interior design intern. I'm particularly interested in the study of Ergonomics, which is how components within the built environment impact and support human health and anatomy. Overall, however, I am interested in how elements of the built environment impact wellness- both physical and psychological - and how we can construct spaces that bring out the best in people. In the future, my hope is to be a leader in the healthcare facility design field.

Evaluate your Personal Narrative

Always practice with others and have them critique your narrative or elevator pitch. In addition to their feedback you can ask: if your narrative was clear and if it was memorable and interesting.

Tips and Pointers

- An elevator pitch is usually less than 60 seconds and around 200 words long, but the personal narrative can be much longer
- Eliminate jargon; you do not want to make your audience feel intimidated by terms they are not familiar with or understand. Explaining yourself well when needed can highlight your strengths in communication, and can help to portray you as a good teacher, co-worker, and consultant
- Be dynamic; don't always use the same pitch - tailor your pitch to the situation and audience and try to relate to them as much as possible
- Use examples and anecdotes to make your pitch more memorable

Remember! Your narrative is not concrete once it's done, you are free to change your "brand identity" anytime you want! The most important thing is to get started, test it out, and constantly update and improve!

Additional Examples:

I am a sophomore majoring in Human Development at Cornell University. My major takes the life course perspective towards human life, examining the factors influencing different age groups. This connects well to my goals of attending medical school and becoming a behavioral therapist. I have known for many years that I was meant to support the autism cause. My hope is that I can utilize the skills I have developed in observation and communication to serve the needs of children with various disorders and prepare them for adulthood. I am fortunate to have had opportunities to volunteer with special needs children that are elementary, middle, and high school-aged in both school and clinical settings. My life motto is slow and steady wins the race. I believe that everyone deserves the time, patience, and chance to defy all expectations – those that others may have of them and those that they may have of themselves. I want to show people that I am doing just this and that they can do it, too.

My name is Mary and I am a junior studying Human Biology, Health and Society at Cornell University. Through my studies, I realized that being a doctor is not the only way to help people in a healthcare setting. Instead, working at a more 'up stream' level within the healthcare industry can have an even more profound effect. As a result, I have been particularly drawn towards hospital administration, and more specifically how management could not only facilitate performance improvement, but also increase practitioner satisfaction. Last summer, I had the opportunity to intern at the Huntington Hospital, where I was able to take part in a project in collaboration with doctors that aimed to improve clinical performance by increasing points of communication between physicians and nurses. With this upcoming summer, I am hoping to gain further opportunity in the health management sector to further develop my management knowledge and skills in health care sites other than a hospital environment.