

Creating an Elevator Speech

Using value-based language to advocate for library services to children & families



Successful elevator speeches use value-based language to allow you to advocate for the transformative services the library offers children and families every day. Start building your own strong elevator speech with this template, where you replace the bracketed sections with the specific patron group, program, and outcome you want to tout:

"I help [target audience*]
[verb phrase*] at the library so that
[proven/expected positive outcome for target audience*] ."

Use this template to answer the common question asked of library staff: "What do you do at the library?"

Instead of answering with a job responsibility (e.g., "I do storytime at the library.") you can instead reply in a manner that highlights the impact of what the library offers in your community:

"I help parents and caregivers promote kindergarten readiness at the library so that their young children can start school ready to learn."

This type of value-based elevator speech is much more powerful for advocating for the library.



Sample Scenarios for Elevator Speeches

Talking with a local community organization:

What does the library do?



We help youth from low-income households to find, read, and learn from high-quality, interesting materials at the library over the summer so that they maintain their reading level and return to school ready to learn.



Talking with teachers & school administrators:

What does the library do for students?



We help students access a range of print and digital resources related to school assignments so that they can achieve school success.



Talking with a manager or board member:

What goes on in the youth department?



We provide opportunities for young children and their caregivers to talk, sing, read, write, and play together at the library so that caregivers understand their vital role in helping their children be prepared to start kindergarten.



Elevator Speech about Every Child Ready to Read®

An elevator speech is a short (30 to 45 seconds) “commercial” that usually is delivered one-on-one or to a small number of people. Your elevator speech about ECRR should focus on the importance of developing early literacy skills and how your library can help.

To be most effective, follow these guidelines.

- Keep the elevator speech simple and easy to understand.
- Include a benefit.
- Customize it to your audience.
- Practice so your elevator speech sounds conversational and natural.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Don't rush.
- Use the elevator speech as a way to start a conversation about early literacy and Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®.

Here are a few examples of an elevator speech that you can use or adapt.

Example 1

At the [library name] we help children get ready to read. Learning to read is a complex process and it begins long before children start school. We teach parents how to develop early literacy skills in children from birth to age five. This gives children an advantage when they start school. They are ready to learn to read.

Example 2

Do you know about the library's early literacy program? We teach parents how to use simple activities to help children develop the skills they will need to learn to read. Children who struggle with reading in kindergarten and first grade often lack important early literacy skills. We want every child in [name of community] to develop these skills so they are ready to learn to read once they start school.

Example 3

If you have children younger than five, we have several exciting new programs for you. They focus on what parents can do to help children get ready to read. You'll learn how to use simple but fun activities to develop important pre-reading skills, and you'll see how easy it is to make these part of everyday routines. Here's a program schedule. I hope you can come.

Example 4

Hi, my name is _____. I work with parents who want to help their children become good readers. So much of school success is based on reading, but learning to read begins years before children start school. Children from birth to five need to develop early literacy skills before they can actually learn to read. Parents are in the best position to teach these skills. Let me give you some additional information.