CREATING YOUR SELF-INTRODUCTION

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The Importance of Your Your Self-Introduction

Despite the impressive and innovative things you are doing in your grad program or postdoc, if people are unfamiliar with your specific research area or discipline, it doesn't mean much to them. It's your job to communicate who you are and what you have to offer to as diverse an audience as possible. Don't assume someone who works at a tech company speaks Java, that someone at an accounting firm speaks revenue law, or that someone in higher education speaks critical pedagogy.

When creating your self-introduction, the most important thing to remember is this: your self-introduction is <u>meant for employers</u>, so focus on communicating what's most important for them to know and leave the rest out.

What to Avoid in Your Self-Introduction

Here are things your introduction should NOT do:

- NOT make you sound like a one-dimensional corporate drone

- NOT bore or confuse people with too much technical jargon

- NOT leave people wondering what exactly it is you do

- NOT leave out your personal passions or side projects (if relevant)

- NOT sound sleezy or like you're selling something

- NOT undersell or oversell your skills and experiences

How to Craft Your Self-Introduction

Once you craft your self-introduction, you can use pieces of your introduction whenever you need (e.g. when introducing yourself to employers, when talking to people at networking events, in your online professional profiles, in your resume or cover letter, and during interviews). Key pieces of information to keep in mind when drafting your introduction:

- **Focus on what's most important** - It's easy to overwhelm someone with too much information. Rather than focusing on cramming as much as possible in a 30-60 second introduction, focus on the bigger more important things you've done that will be of most interest to the employer. High level overviews, with some details sprinkled in, will be enough and should prompt the person with whom you're speaking to ask questions.

- **Pay attention to framing** - How you explain things matters. Use active voice (e.g. "I use," "I synthesize," and "I work with") instead of passive voice, include details when they matter (e.g. mentioning certain skills), and make sure you end with a call to action (e.g. ask a question).

- **Prepare to break it up** - Ideally, in social interactions, you'll be engaging in a conversation. This means the person you're speaking with will want to share information and respond to things you say. Rarely do we just walk up to someone and talk at them for a minute or more. With that in mind, prepare to be interrupted or asked questions while delivering your introduction when networking.

Craft Your Self-Introduction

Now it's time to draft your self-introduction so grab a piece of paper or open a new Word document and get to work. If unsure of how to structure your self-introduction, consider using the following template as a starting point and tailor as needed:

- Your name and your current role/position (e.g. PhD candidate studying..., Postdoc researching...)

- Reason why you're talking to the person (e.g. mention your interest in a particular opportunity, company, field, or industry)

- Statements highlighting relevant skills or experiences (e.g. mention roles you've had, specific research you've done, and technical skills you possess)

- Question, to shift conversation to person with whom you are speaking (e.g. what information can this person provide that would be helpful for or interesting to you)

Final Reminders

Your self-introduction, like your resume, should be tailored to each interaction, paying attention to who you are speaking with and what your goal is for the interaction. Further, the only way to improve your self-introduction is to use your self-introduction so get out there and get talking to people. It's okay if you stumble or struggle in the beginning. The goal isn't that you deliver your introduction perfectly every time, but that you put yourself out there to meet other people.