

# CREATING YOUR SELF-INTRODUCTION

University of Arizona Graduate Center

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## *The Importance of Your Your Self-Introduction*

Despite all the very cool and innovative things you might be doing in your grad program or postdoc, if people don't have familiarity 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 meant for employers, 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 sleazy or like you're selling something
- NOT undersell or oversell your skills and experiences

## *Crafting Your Self-Introduction*

Now is the time to craft your self-introduction. Once crafted, 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.



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- **Pay attention to framing** - How you explain things matters. Use active voice (e.g. I use, I synthesize, I work with) instead of passive voice, include details when they really matter (e.g. name dropping a certain technical skill), 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.

Time to get to it! A good idea is to grab a piece of paper or open a new Word document. Feel free to go rogue and do your own thing, or use the following template to write out the pieces of your introduction:

- Your name and your current role/position (e.g. PhD candidate studying..., Postdoc researching...)
- Reason why you're talking to the person (e.g. interest in a particular opportunity, company, field, or industry)
- Statements highlighting fit (e.g. talk about 1-3 skills or experiences you have that make you someone they should want to talk to)
- Question, to shift conversation to person with whom you are speaking (e.g. what information can this person provide you?)

### ***Final Reminders***

Your self-introduction, like your resume, should be tailored to each interaction, paying particular 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.

