

# Ph.D. Student Elevator Pitch Grammar

by Ben Shapiro

<Elevator-Pitch> ::= <identification-part> <research-part>

<identification-part> ::= <name-part> <institution-part>  
<advisor-part>

<name-part> ::= "My name is ..."

<institution-part> ::= "I'm a PhD student in the ... <program/department>  
at <college/university> in <Place>"

<advisor-part> ::= "My advisor is ..."

<research-part> ::= <broad-area-part> <problem-part> <approach-part>  
<findings-part> <next-steps-part>

<broad-area-part> ::= *Some sort of very high level description of the general area. For example, "I study how students learn data structures" or "I study ways to involve indigenous youth in computer science."*

<problem-part> ::= *No more than two sentences about what problem you are trying to give some traction on. For example, "Right now it can be difficult for teachers to diagnose how students understand the runtime behavior of different algorithms."*

<approach-part> ::= *No more than three sentences how you are investigating that problem. For example, "We are designing new kinds of breadboards that can visualize how electrons flow through a circuit. Then we analyze students' problem solving to understand how those visualizations shape their problem solving."*

<findings-part> ::= *No more than three sentences about what you're found so far. For example, "Arranging the pre-written code fragments is not only faster than writing code, but also standardizes the form of students' output. This enables teachers to more quickly spot errors in students' algorithms, and to give precise feedback to students that actually helps them to write more correct algorithms next time."*

<next-steps-part> ::= *No more than one sentence about what you're doing next. For example, "I plan to monitor blood glucose levels to see if hunger predicts the poor behavior I observed in pair programming."*