

TELL AND RETELL YOUR ELEVATOR STORY

As soon as you have a working answer and a few reasons, create an elevator story.

Imagine that you step in an elevator and find your teacher, who asks, “So, how’s the paper going? What do you expect to say?” You have only a couple of floors to sum up where you are. Early on, you can use this plan:

1. I am working on the problem of [state your question].
2. I think I can show that [state your hypothesis] because [state your reasons].
3. My best evidence is [summarize your evidence].

If you have a writing group, have everyone tell their elevator story at the start of every meeting. If not, tell yours to anyone who will listen—a friend, a parent, even your dog will do. As you learn more and your argument develops, refine your elevator story and tell it again. The more often you encapsulate your argument in an elevator story, the sooner your paper will come together.