TELLING YOUR STORY: THE PITCH

How to practice, deliver your pitch with confidence, handle tough questions, and follow up.

TYPE: GUIDE REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 2026 TIME: 9 MINUTES LEVEL: BEGINNER

AT A GLANCE

- A good pitch is a **clear story**: the problem, your solution, your proof, and what you need.
- Prepare a **30-second, 3-minute and 10-minute** version.
- Practice out loud, prepare for hard questions, and always **follow up** within a day.

Why it matters

Investors and lenders hear many pitches. The ones they remember are simple, honest and specific. Your story also shows how you think, how you handle pressure and whether you know your business.

Three versions

Version	When to use it	What to cover
30 seconds	Networking, introductions, the start of a call	Who you help, the problem, what you do, one proof point
3 minutes	Pitch competitions, quick meetings	Problem, solution, traction, business model, the ask
10 minutes	Full investor meetings	All 12 deck slides, then questions. See **R-18 Building a Pitch Deck**.

30-second example: "I run Rosa's Cleaning Co. Busy families hate getting a different cleaner every visit. We send the same trusted, bilingual cleaner every time, booked by text. We have 180 recurring clients and grew 60% last year. We're raising $150,000 to open in a second city."

Step by step: practicing

1. **Write your story** in plain words. Start with a customer's problem.
2. **Practice out loud**, at least 10 times. Time yourself.
3. **Record yourself** and watch it back.

4. **Practice with real people**: mentors, other founders, friends who'll be honest.
5. **List the 20 hardest questions** you might get, and prepare short answers.

Handling questions

- **Listen fully** before answering.
- **Answer directly** and briefly. Then stop.
- **Use numbers** where you can.
- **If you don't know, say so**: "I don't know yet. Here's how I'll find out, and I'll send it to you by Friday." Then do it.
- **Don't get defensive.** Tough questions mean they're taking you seriously.

Questions you'll likely hear

- Why you? Why now?
- How do customers find you, and what does it cost to win one?
- What are your margins?
- Who are your competitors, and why will you win?
- What will you do with the money, and what will it achieve?
- What's the biggest risk to this business?

> TIP
>
> Pitching in your second or third language? That's a strength: it shows you can reach customers others can't. Speak slowly, use short sentences, and let your numbers and story do the work.

Following up

1. Send a **thank-you email within 24 hours**.
2. Include your deck and any answers you promised.
3. Ask about **next steps** and timing.
4. Add them to your investor tracker. See **R-28 Investor Tracker**.
5. Send **short updates** on progress, even if they said "not now." See **R-22 Investor Updates: Keeping Investors in the Loop**.

Common mistakes

- **Reading slides word for word.**
- **Going over time.**
- **Exaggerating numbers.** Investors check.
- **Not asking for anything.** Always end with a clear ask.

Your checklist

- ☐ Write your 30-second, 3-minute and 10-minute pitches
- ☐ Practice out loud 10 times and record one
- ☐ Prepare answers to 20 hard questions
- ☐ Pitch to 3 people for feedback
- ☐ Set a follow-up routine

Where to go next

- **R-18 Building a Pitch Deck**
- **R-22 Investor Updates: Keeping Investors in the Loop**
- **R-04 Grants and Pitch Competitions**

IMPORTANT
This guide is general education from the Project Underdogs Founder Library. It is not legal, tax, accounting, immigration or investment advice, and it is not an offer of investment or a promise of funding. Figures are general examples and ranges, not quotes. Rules change and every business is different, so check your situation with a qualified professional. Full terms: LIB-03 Disclaimer and Terms of Use.