

## TIPS ON TELLING YOUR STORIES IN A JOB INTERVIEW/NETWORKING:

- Have 10-12 stories ready when you go into any job interview. They should be your real life experience stories from which you learned or accomplished something, or from which you acquired a new or reinforced an existing skill or positive quality.
- Include at least a few stories from your semester or travels abroad. The profound learning and the unique experiences abroad typically make for some great examples.
- Your time abroad has a certain 'shelf life' for greatest relevance, and you should use it to your advantage. If you study abroad as an undergraduate, your stories from that experience are highly relevant upon your return and for at least awhile after graduating.
- Don't have all of your stories be from your time abroad! You need to show balance of all the kinds of experiences you have had in your life so far – for example as a student, an athlete, an employee (even in a part-time job), as the leader of a student organization, etc.
- A good way to build your collection of stories is to think about times when you have been especially challenged or taken a risk. Your story might be about something that happened on a given day (for example, you took the wrong bus in Beijing and got lost), or a situation that happened over time (you were challenged by the differences in the education system abroad). Either way, give it a beginning and an end while making a relevant point and specifically identifying the skill or quality it demonstrates.
- Be sure to show respect for cultural differences. No matter how challenging the situation was, you don't want to use denigrating terms. Instead of telling how 'ridiculously small' your room was in your homestay, you need to explain that the room was 'much smaller than you were used too.'
- Stories need to be appropriate. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Be aware that even though you now understand that having a drink with friends in a pub is a common no-big-deal occurrence in Ireland, you may want to eliminate any reference to pubs, bars or alcohol in your stories since that may not be the frame of reference for your interviewer.
- You need to be able to describe/discuss your international experience in more ways than just "it was great! I loved it!" Go beyond statements such as "I learned a lot about another culture!" or "It was a life changing experience!"
- Provide specific scenarios/stories to illustrate what you've learned, what've you experienced, how you've changed, etc. Be prepared to use a variety of specific experiences to describe skills such as: independent thinking, problem solving, flexibility, adaptable, open to other cultures and people, "thinking on your toes," interpersonal skills, communication skills, etc.
- If language skills are important/required for the position, be prepared to conduct part or the entire interview in that language – it might happen!
- Review the skills needed for the position and develop examples from your study abroad experience to document these skills.

Great advice [found in this article](#) on articulating your study abroad experience in your cover letter, résumé, and interviews and making your international experience look professional.

## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR ONE LINE RESPONSE TO "TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SEMESTER IN..."

When you find yourself an interview, networking or talking to grandma – it is typical for them to ask 'small questions' such as..."Oh, I see you spent a semester studying in Spain, how was that?" When they do...are you ready? You need to be prepared to respond with a concise and meaningful response – more than just "it was awesome." Instead, try responding with..."My experience in Spain was one of personal transformation." "My experience in Spain was one of personal transformation. While studying Spanish through the IE University in Segovia and volunteering as at the local school with 4 graders, Ciutat, I discovered my true passion for teaching others in a second language as my ability to engage and communicate with diverse cultures."

# THE “ELEVATOR PITCH”

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. That’s why you need to be able to introduce yourself and answer the question “tell me about yourself” clearly and concisely. You may use your elevator pitch when you are networking prior to your actual job search; or to answer “tell me about yourself” during the job interview.

## KEY COMPONENTS

- Introduction
- Education; professional development
- Work experience; key accomplishments
- Transferable skills, if necessary
- Current status; what you have to offer
- Employment opportunities you are seeking
- *Length – 30 seconds to max of 2 minutes*

## USES FOR YOUR INFOMERCIAL

- Response to “tell me about yourself” during job interview
- In any situation when you are making “networking” connections
- Portions can be used on your resume
- Increase confidence as you introduce yourself
- Script when making “cold” telephone calls
- When requesting informational interviews or advice

### **NETWORKING EXAMPLE:** *(use only as a guide – create your own, specific to your situation)*

Thanks so much for being willing to speak with me. My name is Jane Jobseeker, and Nan Networker gave me your name as someone who might have information for me about the field of bioethics, in which I am very interested.

In May I will be graduating from the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health with an MPH in Public Health Administration and Policy. While in school, I worked as a research assistant, and I am especially proud of the fact that I presented a poster presentation on tobacco use prevention at the ASPH conference last year.

As I mentioned, I am exploring information about the field of bioethics, with a goal of combining my skills and education working in a small non-profit. I have a few questions about your position and this agency and wonder if you could tell me a little about what you do and what it is like to work here.

### **INTERVIEWING EXAMPLE:** *(use only as a guide – create your own, specific to your situation)*

First, thank you for this opportunity to interview with you today. As you know from my resume and cover letter, my undergraduate degree is in Biology, and I graduated with honors from the College of Saint Benedict. I became interested in public health while I was volunteering at a Missonvale Community Center in South Africa, and realized how prevalent the issue of health disparities is around the world.

I enrolled in the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health, and in May, I will be graduating with an MPH in Community Health Promotion. While in school and through my community service activities, I developed skills and strengths both in research and public speaking – especially presenting educational sessions on a variety of health issues to diverse populations. I am especially proud of the fact that one of the sessions I designed and created was so popular, I have been asked to present it to several more groups.

One of the reasons I am excited about interviewing for your agency is that it has such a great reputation, and the position sounds both challenging and like a perfect fit for my skills.

Adapted from “Beyond Amazing and Awesome” handout from MN re-entry Conference 2013

# RESUME ASSISTANCE

**Resume Descriptions:** *You may want to include information about international experiences on your resume. This information can be helpful when applying for graduate school, volunteering, or employment opportunities.*

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## In the “RELATED EXPERIENCE” section of your resume:

**Volunteer,** House of Resurrection, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, Spring 2016

- Provided child care and interacted with children diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
- Organized, implemented and supervised structured recreational activities.
- Prepared and served balanced meals.
- Completed home improvement projects such as painting and yard work.

**Vice President,** International Affairs Club, College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, MN, Spring 2010 - Present

- Plan and coordinate the club’s monthly “speaker series.”
- Assist the President in leading/facilitating monthly club meetings.
- Plan, organize, and implement activities for annual campus “Festival of Cultures.”

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## As a separate category, describe your language skills...

**LANGUAGE SKILLS:** Proficient in reading, writing, and speaking Spanish.

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## To emphasize study/education abroad, include your international experience under the “EDUCATION” section...

**Bachelor of Arts,** St. John’s University, Collegeville, MN

Expected May 2018

Major: Biochemistry                      GPA: 3.37/4.0

Honors: Presidential Scholarship

Study Abroad: India Semester Program at St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata, India, Spring 2016

## Include information as part of “INTERESTS” section of their resume:

**Interests:** International travel (Brazil, Spain, and Estonia), Amnesty International, Spanish Club

**List foreign language(s):** Specify language skill level (e.g. basic, intermediate, fluent)

## II. Presenting Your Transferable Skills: The Cover Letter

Collectively, my coursework, study abroad experience, internships, and co-curricular involvement have prepared me well for the [position] at [name of company].

...

While enrolled at the [name of program] in summer 2006, I had the opportunity to complete an internship at [name of company]. This experience helped me to hone my [specify, e.g. analytical, research, etc.] skills and gave me insight into how to work effectively in a cross-cultural situation in the context of health care services. I believe this skill will prove beneficial in working with [name of company] global clients.

Provide an opening statement that introduces your diverse experience.

Mention the name of the program where you studied and state the name of the organization where you interned.

Clearly articulate what you learned from the experience and how this will help you in the position you are applying to.