



TOOLKIT

Speed Dating - Educator Guide

Speed dating has been around for many years as a forum for developing new personal relationships, but the concept is often applied in the development of business relationships and other networks. It can provide the basis for activities to try out different skills and develop confidence, either with peers or with industry.

If you developed an [elevator pitch](#), polish the 30-second version for a speed networking activity. The speed dating approach can work in countless situations: for example, to:

- Find innovative projects;
- Identify common interests;
- Develop new networks; and
- Practice pitching ideas or products to clients, or to potential employers.

A FEW POINTERS

- Give the information to groups ahead of time so that they can prepare.
- If students are trying out their presentation skills, create small groups and let them start with a topic they know really well. Encourage students to give each other constructive feedback so that they are developing skills in communication as well.
- If you're inviting business people or other visitors, ask what they are looking for and encourage your groups to research their visitors' interests in advance.
- Always allow students to rehearse their pitch with peers before they face strangers, and remind them to speak slowly and clearly.
- Provide refreshments after the event. This encourages attendance and provides an informal space for networking. It can be a vital time for people to further a potential connection.
- Always have water at the tables.
- Provide regular breaks. We find that 20 minutes worth of three-minute pitches is saturation point!
- Allow time for people to move between tables or change presenters.
- If you are inviting a single PowerPoint slide from each participant, make sure they save it in the same version of PowerPoint you use (or an earlier version). Ask them to keep it simple, make sure they submit only a single slide, and give them a 'send by' date.



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The traditional approach for speed dating is to have the room set with a row of tables. Every three minutes, the people on one side of the table move along one seat and talk to a new person. If you are adopting this approach:

- Make sure students have a business card or similar to give to each person they talk to.
- Have everyone wear a name tag so they can be identified when you break for networking.
- Make sure there is plenty of space between tables.
- Think carefully about noise levels – space, music, and background noise.

There are lots of approaches to speed dating activities. I once went to a conference that included two 40-minute 'speed networking' sessions. To participate, delegates submitted a single PowerPoint slide on which was written the project/idea title and their contact details. These were compiled into a single PowerPoint presentation and each person was given three minutes. After two and a half minutes a bell rang, and at three minutes the microphone was turned off! Contact details were housed on the conference website, and each session was followed by morning tea so that ideas could be followed up. If students have had enough practice, this is a great activity using a topic such as what they would like to achieve in their careers.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLE

On the following page is an example of a speed research activity run at Curtin University (Australia) with colleague Suzette Worden. We were expecting about 40 people and so we adopted a similar format to the one above. The invitation (as shown on page 3) was sent out by email a month prior to the event, and the single PowerPoint slides were later compiled and published on our website so that people (including those who couldn't attend) could access them. Our three-hour activity attracted 15 presentations and resulted in four new proposals for collaborative work, one of which spanned five different schools.

Our focus was fostering new research ideas and collaborations, so feel free to use and adapt the invitation text. Please share your invitations and feedback, particularly if you develop invitations for visiting business people, agents etc.

Encourage students to think about themselves as professionals: for example, as student engineers rather than engineering students. Business cards can be sourced very cheaply online, and students can gain a lot from thinking about the words they use to describe themselves.

This resource was contributed by Dawn Bennett (Curtin University).

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EVENT INVITATION

Please join us for our first combined event of the year. The event's focus is 'speed research' and there are four key objectives, namely to:

- Share research ideas and interests in an informal setting.
- Identify colleagues with similar interests.
- Identify and locate assistance as required.
- Create a project strategy and (if necessary) secure seed funding to enable the project.

The afternoon will be structured into the following sections:

Time	Event
1pm	Introduction
1:10 - 1:40pm	Three-minute speed research pitches and questions
1:40 - 2pm	Break-out to pitch of choice
2pm	Break (tea and coffee)
2:10 - 2:40pm	Three-minute speed research pitches and questions
2:40 - 3pm	Break-out to pitch of choice
3pm	Update
3:10 - 3:40pm	Final selection
3:40 - 4pm	Report back and timeline

What is speed researching?

We are using the 'speed dating' model! Each proposer has three minutes to present an idea to the group. We can fit six presentations into each half hour slot, after which there is an open space for making contact with presenters and potential collaborators. Presentations can be about an interest, existing project, idea, question, call for collaborators, proposal, or call for specific help.

What should you do?

1. Register so that we know how many people to expect. Please come along – this will be a great event if everyone comes. Register with (person) at (email).
2. Think about what you would like to say and what you would like to achieve, and remember you have only three minutes!
3. Create a single PowerPoint slide that includes a title and your contact details. Send this to (person) by (date). Slides will be shown during the presentations and will be published on the website. Please don't include any media files, and keep the slides simple.
4. Volunteer to help if you can find the time (setting up, tidying up afterwards, compiling the PowerPoint slides – all small jobs).

When and where?

Room/Address

Date(s) Time

Parking

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