

The College of Charleston – Perfect Your Pitch

September 2026

Tips for Preparing Your Pitch Video

This is a wonderful opportunity to practice sharing what the College of Charleston's fundraising priorities are, why they're important, and the impact of these gifts to the school now and into the future.

Here's a way to think about this: imagine you've run into a new prospect at an event, and they say, "What are the current fund-raising priorities or why are you in a campaign?"

Your pitch video should be no longer than five minutes. The time will go quickly, so **plan it out.** Think about what you want to say, the key points you'll make, and decide on the order of the opportunities you'll present.

Highlight only **one priority** in your pitch video. Speak as if you're having a conversation with a donor—not delivering a formal presentation. Use the knowledge you already have. You don't need to make anything up. **Keep it focused.** You don't need to cover everything—tell one compelling story well.

Getting started: When you start the video launch right in. Thank the event guest and then make the pitch for supporting the College of Charleston. Think about the most important fund-raising priority and share why a gift to one/all of them could have a real impact. Provide some examples, making the viewer's potential philanthropy come to life.

Here is a simple framework for your pitch video:

- **Hook** — Capture attention with a story, insight, or compelling statement.
- **Opportunity** — Explain the need and why it matters now.
- **Impact** — Show how philanthropic support will make a meaningful difference.
- **Close** — Leave the donor inspired and confident that their investment will have lasting impact.

Your pitch should answer:

- Why does this priority matter?
- Why is now the right time?
- What impact will philanthropy have?
- Why should a donor invest?

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- **Use Simple and Declarative Language and Speak Clearly:**
 - Express ideas in a straightforward and easily understandable manner
 - Avoid jargon or overly technical language
 - Aim for simplicity without sacrificing depth
- **Vary Your Tone, Speed, and Volume:**
 - Utilize a dynamic speaking style to keep the donor engaged
 - Adjust tone to convey appropriate emotions
 - Control speed to emphasize key points
 - Modulate volume to underscore important messages
- **Maintain Eye Contact:**
 - Establish a connection by maintaining regular eye contact
 - Show sincerity and confidence through eye contact
 - Be mindful of natural and periodic eye contact to feel natural, not forced
- **Use Body/Hand Gestures**
 - Employ purposeful gestures to complement verbal communication
 - Emphasize key points or concepts with appropriate hand movements
 - Ensure gestures enhance the message without distraction
 - Pay attention to your own body language, ensuring it reflects confidence and openness
 - Additionally, be aware of your audience's body language to gauge their engagement and adjust your approach accordingly
- **Engage Your Audience**
 - Encourage questions and feedback from the donor
 - Tailor the presentation to resonate with the donor's interests
 - Share compelling stories or examples for emotional connection
- **Display Comfort with Your Topic and Task:**
 - Demonstrate expertise and passion for the cause

- Anticipate potential questions or concerns
- Communicate genuine commitment to project success
- **Organize Your Content:**
 - Structure your presentation logically. Use a clear introduction, body, and conclusion
 - Capture attention from the beginning with a compelling introduction. This could be a surprising fact, a relevant anecdote, or a thought-provoking question
 - Summarize key points and end with a strong conclusion that leaves a lasting impression. Consider ending with a call to action or a thought-provoking statement
- **Practice, but Avoid Over-Rehearsing:**
 - Practice your presentation multiple times to familiarize yourself with the content. However, avoid sounding robotic or scripted. Aim for a natural, conversational tone.
 - Avoid using notes and writing out the full talk. Using bullet points that can clue you into the next point you want to make is a better strategy. NO notes is best.
- **Manage Your Time:**
 - Be mindful of your allotted time and pace your presentation accordingly. Practice delivering your content within the time constraints to avoid rushing or running over
 - Rehearsing the pitch in advance will help give you an idea of how much time you need in order not to rush

EXTRA TIPS FOR ANY PRESENTATION:

- Relax and be yourself.
- Understand the message that you want to share is bigger than your inhibitions and create the belief in the case for support through your words.
- Bullet points will help to keep you organized, in sync with your message.
- Be organized. Open with a statement. Share the priorities, talk about specific impacts donor support will have, summarize, and thank the viewer.
- Take your time and breathe.

TIPS FOR THE FUTURE:

When you are thrown a curveball in a donor conversation: Space, Pace and Grace.

While you're not facing any curveballs when you make your pitch video, you will someday in a conversation with a donor. Caroline Goyer, a wonderful expert on public speaking writes: *The mantra you need is simple: Space, Pace, Grace.* These can apply to your presentations but can be helpful anytime you are speaking with a prospective donor. Imagine a donor meeting where you're thrown a curveball.

- **Space**: Before you speak, breathe out silently, subtly. Wait for the in-breath. Let it be calm and relaxed to tell your system it's safe.
- **Pace**: Put the brakes on, take your time, no rush, no drama
- **Grace**: Tune into what's going on for the people you are speaking to. Find empathy and curiosity – check in with them. Look at your audience to determine how engaged they are. You can tell if they are listening to or comprehending what you are sharing.

Here is Caroline's post on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/carolinegoyder/>). There are additional tips she shares in the post.