

# Elevator Pitch Toolkit

**PURPOSE** To equip UTR staff, volunteers, ambassadors, partners, and board members with **clear, flexible messaging** that communicates our mission effectively in any setting, without sounding scripted or stiff.

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## CORE ELEVATOR PITCH

These messages below are here to help you share what you do in a way that feels authentic to you. The goal isn't memorization—it's connection—so we encourage you to draw from your own experiences and use your own voice.

◊ **One-Sentence, ±10 seconds | Tabling Event**

*United Through Reading helps military families stay connected through recorded storytime—anytime, anywhere.*

OR

*We help military families stay connected through recorded storytime—anytime, anywhere.*

◊ **Two-Sentence, ±30 seconds | Short Intro / Passerby Conversation**

*We connect military families through the power of storytime. With our free app and books, service members and veterans can record themselves reading to the children they love—no matter the distance.*

OR

*Service members and veterans can video record themselves reading a book to any child in their life at any time. We have recording locations around the world and a free and easy to use app. Books can be mailed to the recipient if they can't be hand-delivered. The best part about the program is that it's all free.*

OR

*United Through Reading connects military families through the power of reading aloud. With our free app and books, service members and veterans can record themselves reading to the children they love—no matter the distance.*

◊ **Casual Intro, ± 1 minutes | General Use**

*We're a nonprofit focused on keeping military families—whether active duty or veteran—connected through shared storytime. Service members can video record themselves reading books, and with each recording, request a new free book to be sent wherever they choose—so storytime is always within reach when that special child needs it most.*

*We're a nonprofit that helps military families stay connected through the gift of reading aloud. Using our free app, service members and veterans can record themselves reading to a special child—and each recording earns a free book to send home.*

❖ **Event Intro, ± 2 minutes | Program/Donor Introduction**

*United Through Reading strengthens military families' connections and literacy through shared storytime—even when they can't be together.*

*Through our free mobile app and book program, service members and veterans can record themselves reading aloud to the child or children they love. Each time they record, they can request a new children's book, free to keep or send home.*

*Whether the service member's a parent reading from a ship, an older sibling away for a training weekend, or a godparent living in a different state, our program helps them stay connected to the kids they love—one story at a time.*

OR

*At United Through Reading, we believe storytime has the power to keep military families connected—especially when they can't be together.*

*Our free mobile app and book program allows service members and veterans to record themselves reading aloud to a special child in their life. That could be a son or daughter, a younger sibling, a grandchild, or a godchild back home. And each time they make a recording, they can request a new children's book to be delivered wherever it's needed most, all at no charge.*

*Whether the service member is a parent, grandparent, sibling, or close friend, our program helps them stay connected to the child they love by maintaining routines, sharing comfort, and building lifelong bonds—one story at a time.*

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## AUDIENCE-BASED MESSAGING

### Know Your Audiences

Before diving into tailored messaging, it's helpful to understand the role each audience plays and where confusion might occur. If you're new to UTR, are unfamiliar with military life, or want a refresher, the following section is for you. **This is not an exhaustive list.**

- **Service members (active, reserve, guard)** are often the program's direct users. They may be new to UTR and looking for easy ways to stay connected.
- **Veterans** are fully eligible but may not realize it. They often assume programs like UTR are "for active duty only."
- **Spouses, caregivers, and extended family** often initiate program use or help children access books and videos, whether or not they're listed in DEERS.

- **Ombudsmen, FRG leads, and leadership spouses** are key messengers and influencers, and they may not use UTR themselves but are critical connectors and advocates.
- **Educators, therapists, and child & youth staff** work with military kids and can refer families to UTR. They're secondary advocates.
- **Donors and stakeholders** want to understand UTR's impact and alignment with their goals.
- **Corporate volunteers** likely have no prior military connection, so they need a concise, mission-driven summary and to understand how their time makes a difference.

Knowing how each group fits into the ecosystem will help you tailor your pitch without overexplaining and ensure everyone feels included.

Audience Type Examples	Message Focus	Example Event Type
<b>Service Members (Active, Reserve, Guard)</b>	Ease of use, emotional connection, and the free app + book combo. Emphasize that separation doesn't have to mean disconnection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pre-deployment briefings</li> <li>● Resource tables for deploying units</li> <li>● Yellow Ribbon events</li> <li>● Intake/Indoc orientations</li> </ul>
<b>Veterans</b>	Affirm inclusion. Emphasize that the program is for <i>anyone who has served</i> and supports connections with children of any age or relation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community fairs</li> <li>● Veteran-specific outreach</li> </ul>
<b>Spouses / Caregivers / Family Members</b>	Routines, emotional benefits of on-demand storytime. Highlight broad definition of family (e.g., grandparents, siblings, friends, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Storytime events</li> <li>● Trunk-or-treats</li> <li>● Yellow Ribbon</li> <li>● Community events</li> </ul>
<b>Educators / Child &amp; Youth Staff / Therapists, etc.</b>	Emotional resilience, literacy, and development. Frame UTR as a free, simple support tool for families managing time apart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educator or CYF program outreach</li> <li>● Storytime events</li> <li>● Resource fairs</li> </ul>
<b>FRG / Ombudsmen / Leadership Spouses</b>	Accessibility, broad family benefits, and free resources. Provide clear info to share with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ombudsman training</li> <li>● Leadership spouse events</li> <li>● FRG training / Triad schools</li> </ul>
<b>Donors / Stakeholders</b>	Mission impact, emotional and educational outcomes, program simplicity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Donor meetings</li> <li>● Community outreach</li> <li>● Employee engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Engagement Volunteers</b>	UTR mission overview + gratitude. Explain how their volunteerism supports families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Book stickering events</li> <li>● Corporate MSS Visits</li> </ul>

## CUSTOMIZED PITCHES BY EVENT TYPE

Each of the following keeps the **core message intact**, but adapts the emphasis slightly based on audience context.

### Service Member Events / Pre-Deployment

*Even when you can't be there in person, (your child/the special kiddo in your life) can still hear your voice. With United Through Reading, you can record yourself reading aloud and send a book home, at no cost to you—so storytime can still happen no matter the distance.*

**Emphasis:** Connection, ease of use, comforting routine, tech + book combo.

**Reinforce:**

- Our programs are not DEERS dependent.
- The servicemember does not have to be deployed.
- Every recording earns a free book.

### Veteran-Focused Events

*Even if you're no longer in uniform, your connection to your family still matters. With our free app and books, veterans can record stories for (kids and grandkids / any special child) in their life and stay part of their daily lives, no matter how far apart you are.*

**Emphasis:** Continued service, connection, inclusion after transition, multigenerational family.

**Reinforce:**

- Services are available to anyone with verifiable status.
- Family is defined broadly.
- Every recording earns a free book.

### Educator / Military-Support Events

*Reading aloud supports emotional connection and literacy. UTR is a free program that lets military families record storytime videos and send books home—helping children feel supported even when their loved one is away.*

**Emphasis:** Child development, emotional well-being, resource referral.

**Reinforce:**

- Continued connection
- Free resource

### Donors / Stakeholders

*United Through Reading is a nonprofit that ensures military families can share storytime—even when they're apart. Our free app and book program support connection, resilience, and early literacy, so no child misses out on storytime.*

**Emphasis:** Mission impact, child/family outcomes, donor relevance.

## FAST FACTS

Additional info to have on-hand:

- A child cannot access recordings on their own—an adult has to create an account to access recordings
- The person requesting the book chooses the book title.
- UTR offers nearly 400 titles, and books range from board books to chapter books (0-17).
- UTR was established in 1989; 94% of UTR staff is military-affiliated (veteran or mil-spouse)

## OPENING HOOK QUESTIONS

For high-traffic events or conversational intros:

- “Have you heard about United Through Reading?”
- “Looking for a way to stay connected while you’re apart/deployed?”
- “Want to send a book and a story to someone you love—for free?”
- “What if your child could still hear and see you, even when you’re away?”

## LANGUAGE GUIDANCE: WORDS & PHRASES TO AVOID

### Instead of...

“Deployment” or “Separation” as a default <sup>1</sup>

“When you’re deployed overseas” <sup>2</sup>

“Mom and Dad” only <sup>3</sup>

“Their son or daughter” <sup>4</sup>

“Just an app” or “Only digital”

### Try this...

“Time apart”

“No matter the distance”

“Service members and veterans” or “Coparent” or “Alternate Caregiver”

“Any child in their life”

“Books & app” or “Recorded storytime”

<sup>1,2</sup> THOUGH NOT EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED, BE MINDFUL OF WHEN YOU USE THESE PHRASES. OUR SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE US ARMED FORCES, AND THEY DON’T HAVE TO BE DEPLOYED OR AWAY FROM THEIR FAMILY OR LOVED ONES TO BENEFIT FROM OUR PROGRAMS.

<sup>3,4</sup> UTR DEFINES MILITARY FAMILIES BROADLY, SO WE USE LANGUAGE THAT ENCOMPASSES VARIOUS FAMILY STRUCTURES.

\*\*\* If you’re at an event, use the **Elevator Pitch Quick Reference** document for a quick refresher. \*\*\*