TIPS FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE 3-MINUTE THESIS

PIZZA TALK 11/10/25

3 MINUTE THESIS (3MT)

- First 3MT was held at University of Queensland
- Present a story of your research/thesis and its importance in only 3 minutes
- 1 static slide – no animations/transitions
- Tailored to the general audience

IMPORTANCE OF 3MT IN CBI

- Showcase your research and presentation skills

- Demonstrate that you can cater your research to a broad audience of people who know nothing about it

- 3MT competitions at conferences
  - chance to win prizes
  - Good thing to put on CV

- Good practice for networking

https://gradschool.umd.edu/3mt

UMD Three-Minute Thesis Competition

The Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition challenges students to communicate the significance of their research projects to a non-specialist audience in just THREE MINUTES! The University of Maryland Graduate School invites graduate students from all disciplines to compete in the annual 3MT Competition.

The first round will be a video competition and occurs during the month of March 2026.
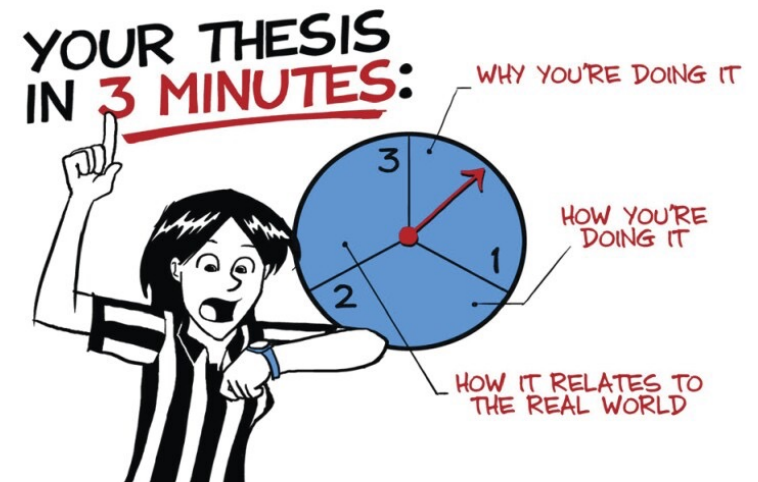
The final round will be in-person, and is scheduled on April 15, 2026 from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Stamp Student Union, in the Charles Carroll Room (second floor).

Participation in the 3MT competition provides students with:

- Experience in presentation skills and public speaking

- Better perspective about how their research fits into the larger picture

- An opportunity to showcase their work to colleagues and prospective employers

- Networking opportunities with students and faculty on campus

- Recognition and prizes
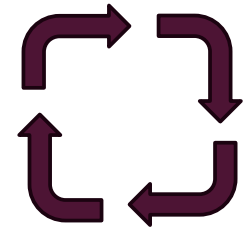
DRAFTING YOUR 3MT

- Keep audience in mind
  - Avoid scientific/academic jargon
  - Explain important concepts of your research
- Tell a story
  - Have beginning, middle and end
  - Tie your end back to the beginning
  - Try to be as concise as possible
- Have a clear outcome in mind
  - What do you want audience to take away from your talk

https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/resources/3mt-competitor-guide

OTHER TIPS FOR DRAFTING 3MT

- Treat your 3MT like a commercial and sell your work
  - Begin with a good hook to catch people's attention
    - This can be comical or catchy
  - Keep people on the line throughout your talk
    - Don't be afraid to use some humor to keep audience interest
- Using analogies instead of scientific jargon to help a general audience understand your research
- Tell your research as a story
  - Have a clear beginning, middle, and end
  - Circle back to the beginning when ending your talk
- Break up your work into more digestible pieces for audience

SETTING UP SLIDE

- Many different ways to set up slide

- Make sure your slide is easy to walk through

  - Consider numbering different portions so audience knows where to look while you are presenting

- Try to keep slide as concise and clean as possible

- Only use short phrases where needed

  - Text heavy 3MT slides will be distracting as the audience will read it instead of listening to what you are saying

Template - Title

Broad Topic	Current issue within that broad topic Or Gap in research in that broad topic	Short explanation of what you are doing to help solve the issue or close the gap - in a broad sense
What your research entails specifically	Interesting data that supports how you are overcoming issue or gap	Future implications of your research

Template - Title

Background	Research being conducted	Results

Template - Title

Central Topic

TIPS FOR CREATING 3MT SLIDE

- Keep as general and simple as possible
  - Avoid having complex or confusing images or figures
  - Avoid having too much stuff on the slide but at the same time avoid having too little
- When inputting figures, consider resizing text/legends and/or reworking figures to simplify it
- Color coding information on slide where you can
  - Use color blind friendly palletes
  - Keep contrast in mind while doing this
  - Use same family of colors (pastel, neon, etc.)
- Use lossless image so images don't get fuzzy/grainy when blown up

TIPS FOR CREATING 3MT SLIDE CONT.

- If you are a person who finds it easier to remove things, put everything on slide first and then cut down

- If you are a person who finds it easier to add things to slide, only input most important things first and then gauge

- Reinforce major ideas on the slide so you don't forget to mention it

- Make multiple slides and keep them in the same slide deck
  - Can help to pick your favorite or the most optimized version
  - Show your progression through the years

3MT SCRIPT

- Talk about each section for ~1 min (background, what you are doing, results)

- Start your talk off with a hook (Imagine….., Start with question, etc.)

- Pace – talk slow and don't be afraid to add pauses into your 3MT
  - Pauses after talking about main points can help with audience understanding

- Use analogies to help audience understand your research better

PRACTICE

- After your slide is set up, practice going though your 3MT on your own and time yourself
  - Don't be harsh on yourself if you are over 3 minutes, often times you talk quicker when you present
- Practice with close friends (including non-scientists) and get feedback from them
- Implement 3MT into group meetings with your lab and practice them yearly or biyearly
- If possible, try projecting your slide prior to presenting your 3MT
  - Gauge if figures are visible

OTHER TIPS FOR PRACTICING 3MT

- Record yourself then listen back

- If you're practicing and you keep forgetting to mention a certain point, put it somewhere on the slide as a reminder

- Ask other people for their opinions on your 3MT
  - It's better to get feedback one on one or in a smaller group rather than a larger group
  - This can also help to alleviate some stress

RESOURCES TO HELP PUT TOGETHER 3MT SLIDE AND PRESENTATION

- Competitor Guides
    - https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/resources/3mt-competitor-guide
    - https://www.mcgill.ca/skillsets/files/skillsets/mcgill_3mt_presenter_guidebook_0.pdf
- Tips for 3MT
    - https://pipettegazette.uthscsa.edu/2020/08/21/10-tips-for-3-minute-thesis-competition/
    - https://gradcenter.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/uagc_page/3mt_hints.pdf
    - https://www.animateyour.science/post/how-to-write-a-winning-3mt-script