The 3MT (or 3-Minute Thesis) is an academic research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland, Australia in 2008. It is one person presenting their research project in one slide and 3 minutes to a non-scientific audience. They should communicate why they are doing their research and what they hope to achieve with it.

As a coach supporting someone preparing for it, or as a judge for any stage of the competition, here are some tips on what you are looking for in a good 3MT.

### GENERAL TIPS

- **DO need to:**
  - Be a communications expert
  - Have coached or judged 3MT before
  - Know anything about the presenter’s research area (or research at all).
  - Understand the spirit of the competition and its rules (see the judging criteria)
  - Be able to give constructive feedback
  - Be receptive to the research of others and be able to ask yourself if it makes sense.

- **DON’T need to:**
  - Be a communications expert
  - Have coached or judged 3MT before
  - Know anything about the presenter’s research area (or research at all).

The 3MT is a communications or presentation competition, not a research competition.

Focus on the structure and backstory and consider if it makes sense to non-scientists.

Watch examples of good 3MT presentations.

A good example is Emily Majestic who won the U of T 3MT in 2023. [Watch the video](https://youtu.be/o8VovRK92Ak)

You can see more examples on the Centre for Graduate Professional Development website.

### STRUCTURE

The structure of the presentation is important, as the presenter needs to tell the story of their research.

- **ANCHOR** Why you’re doing it
- **THE RESEARCH** How you’re doing it
- **THE CLOSE** How it relates to the real world. The “so what?”

- **Anchor**
  - Anchor your story with facts or topics of general public interest or a personal story
  - Transition to your field of research: Bring out the lay science justification of the research to support your research question

- **The Research**
  - What you are going to do to address your research question (lay terms, no acronyms or complicated or scientific terminology). You, not your lab or team
  - Your plan in no more than 3 steps
  - The quick wins (what you have achieved so far or soon) and what long-term success looks like

- **The Close**
  - What is the point of your project?
  - Why you are telling people about your research
  - Loop back to your anchoring statement
HOW TO BE A GREAT COACH OR JUDGE FOR THE 3-MINUTE THESIS (3MT)

THE SLIDE

**SHOULD**
- Be a single, static PowerPoint slide
- Be self explanatory and obvious
- Tell the story of your pitch
- Be accessible: easy to understand, good sized fonts and colours that can be easily read

**SHOULD NOT**
- Use transitions, animations, video or music
- Include data, graphs and charts
- Use disturbing or copyrighted imagery
- Use too much text
- Include affiliations, references to labs, collaborators, sponsors etc.
- Distract from your talk

WHAT PRESENTERS SHOULD AVOID

- Using any technical jargon
- Using non-obvious acronyms (e.g. DNA is probably OK, but RNA is not)
- Using complicated words or sentence structures (a grade 8 should be able to understand the presentation)
- Using language that is too colloquial or familiar (e.g. “like”, “stuff”)
- Expressing personal opinions
- Going into data explanation
- Being vague and non-specific or being too ambitious (although this is a communication competition, the context of the research is important and has to be realistic)
- Improvising or not practicing enough

THE RULES

- Presentations are spoken word only (e.g. no raps, songs, or poems).
- The 3 minutes begins when the presenter starts moving or talking. Competitors who go over the 3 minutes are disqualified.
- A single, static, PowerPoint slide is permitted – no transitions or animations, and no video or music.
- No props are permitted (e.g. costumes including clinical gowns, laboratory equipment etc.).

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JUDGING CRITERIA FOR THE U OF T 3MT

COMMUNICATION

- Did the presenter use language and terminology that was clear and understandable?
- Was the pace of the talk effective?
- Did the presenter use non-verbal communication (e.g. eye contact, voice modulation, body language, etc.) effectively?
- Did the slide enhance, rather than detract from, the talk — was it clear, legible, and concise?

COMPREHENSION AND CONTENT

- Did the talk help you to understand the research being undertaken and its potential impact?
- Did the presenter clearly outline the nature and purpose of their research?
- Did the presenter clearly indicate what is fascinating or compelling about their research?
- Did the talk follow a logical sequence?

ENGAGEMENT

- Was the talk engaging?
- Did the talk inspire you to want to know more?
- Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their work?
- Did the presenter capture and maintain your attention?

FIND OUT MORE

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