Colorado State University

3MT CHALLENGE

1 SLIDE, 1 TALK, 3 MINUTES

Graduate Student Participant Guide

2026

3-Minute Talk Communication Training &
Cohort Professional Development Program

CSU Writes & the
Office of the Vice President for Research

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3MT Rules, Preparation, and Advice

2026 Professional Development 3MT Training and Competition
CSU Writes and Office of the Vice President for Research

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SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: DEC 9 – DEC 19

INTRO SESSION: Process, 3MT Rules/Training Schedule

COHORT MEETING #1: STRATEGY

- Cohort Introductions
- GradShow Poster/Presentation
- 3MT Rules
- Strategy/Brainstorming Session (translating your poster to single slide)

WINTER BREAK: DEC 19, 2025 – JAN 20, 2026

PRESENTATION DRAFTS

- Prepare draft of slide
- Brainstorm options for 3-minute talk

WEEK 2: JAN 20 – 23

COHORT MEETING #2: DRAFTS & FEEDBACK

- Draft of slide & 3-minute talk
- Feedback on each team member's slide
- Practice scripts, feedback

WEEK 3: JAN 26 - 30

COHORT MEETING #3: REVISIONS & PRACTICE

- Revised slide & 3-minute talk
- Feedback on each team member's slide and talk
- Explore scoring rubric and system
- Practice Round, WEDS, JAN 28, 3-4:30, LSC 300

WEEK 4: FEB 2 - 6

COHORT MEETING #4: 3MT Preliminary Rounds

- Finalize slide and talk
- Preliminary rounds: TUE, WEDS, THUR, 3-4:30, LSC 300

WEEK 5: FEB 9 – 11

COHORT MEETING #5:

- Finalists revise, feedback and practice

FEB 11, 5-7pm CSU 3MT Competition at LSC, Longs Peak Room

- Certificates of completion for all 3MT Training Participants
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place Awards
- 1st place Awardee to compete at WAGS & CO-CGS

APRIL 3 Western Association of Graduate Schools 3MT Competition (WAGS – Online)

APRIL (TBA) CO-CGS 3MT Competition, Denver

PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

As 2025 Graduate Student Showcase awardees, you have been recognized for your excellent research and presentation skills. Now, you have the opportunity through this 3-Minute Talk training to continue to hone your skills by working collaboratively with other awardees as you support one another in the crafting of new presentations as 3MTs.

You will be part of cohort (estimated size of 3-6 graduate students). You and your colleagues will learn much from each other as you write, design, and practice your 3MTs together.

Remember to be present and authentic. To listen actively and with respect. To share speaking time and avoid dominating. To lead with curiosity and to connect across differences of discipline, culture, personality, interests, opinion, and more.

The opportunity to share our research with others, to have their full attention, and to receive feedback is one of the great gifts (and stressors) of academe. Practice providing constructive feedback when asked to review a colleague's talk or slide. Practice receiving feedback—even if you initially disagree—consider what a colleague's feedback suggests.

Be considerate of each other's time. Your work together is important. Make every effort to meet when the group has agreed. Medical or personal emergencies are, of course, exemptions, but plan to take care of pressing lab work, household obligations, or other deadlines before or after your cohort meeting times.

ADVICE

You will have access to the INTRODUCTORY SESSION slides and a recording to review.

You can also find many 3MT resources and advice online. Please seek out and use what resonates and speaks to who you are as a researchers and communicator.

Below you will find some curated advice to ease your way and to provide common ground for conversation with your cohort. Our goal is to *keep it simple* and, thus, help you craft and present an *excellent* 3MT.

Take care to not let learning "tips" about the 3MT overtake your preparations for the 3MT. Your best learning and skill development will take place through the following:

- understanding the rules
- identifying the information and details of your research to include/exclude
- crafting the story you wish to tell
- creating a slide
- practicing, practicing, practicing
- getting and incorporating feedback
- learning to breath from your gut and how pace your speech

Practice presenting your work with confidence and as you want it to be remembered, and you'll do great!

3MT RULES

Founded at the University of Queensland, the 3MT has become a feature competition for graduate student (and beyond) research communication at universities around the world.

The 3MT is rooted in good communication practices. As a strategy for clear, effective, and engaging communication, the 3-minute talk has been a mainstay of research communication well before the inception of the 3MT (probably since the mid-20th century). Much of the 3MT advice can apply to techniques of clear communication, and you will find them useful to practice on their own. Other 3MT rules will apply exclusively to the competition.

As a competition, the 3MT has strict rules. They are:

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted. No slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description are allowed. The slide is to be presented from the beginning of the oration.
- No additional electronic media (e.g. sound and video files) are permitted.
- No additional props (e.g. costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment) are permitted
- Presentations are limited to 3 minutes maximum and competitors exceeding 3 minutes are disqualified.
- Presentations are to be spoken word (e.g. no poems, raps or songs).
- Presentations are to commence from the stage.
- Presentations are considered to have commenced when a presenter starts their presentation through either movement or speech.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/resources/competition-rules

GENERAL INFORMATION & ADVICE

UQueensland information
https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/

University of Queensland Competitor Guide
https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/resources/3mt-competitor-guide

The University of Auckland also has an extensive 3MT site. Here are “top tips”:
https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/students/academic-information/postgraduate-students/doctoral/doctoral-opportunities/3-minute-thesis-competition/3mt-top-tips.html

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at UT Health-San Antonio has a super practical set of top tips:
https://pipettegazette.uthscsa.edu/2020/08/21/10-tips-for-3-minute-thesis-competition/

THE SLIDE

https://graduate.iupui.edu/doc/support/3mt-slide-tips.pdf

3MT for Liberal Arts

https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/blog/2019/12/11/the-words-of-a-winner/

FYI: Information provided to 3MT Judges

At every level of the competition each competitor will be assessed on the three judging criteria listed below. Please note that each criterion is equally weighted and has an emphasis on audience.

COMPREHENSION & CONTENT

- Did the presentation provide an understanding of the background to the research question being addressed and its significance?
- Did the presentation clearly describe the key results of the research as it currently stands, if any?
- Did the presentation follow a clear and logical sequence?
- Was the thesis topic, key results and research significance and outcomes communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience?
- Did the speaker avoid scientific jargon, explain terminology and provide adequate background information to illustrate points?
- Did the presenter spend adequate time on each element of their presentation – or did they elaborate for too long on one aspect or was the presentation rushed?

ENGAGEMENT

- Did the oration make the audience want to know more?
- Was the presenter careful not to trivialize or generalize their research?
- Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their research?
- Did the presenter capture and maintain their audience's attention?
- Did the speaker have sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range; maintain a steady pace, and have a confident stance?
- Did the PowerPoint slide enhance the presentation – was it clear, legible, and concise?
- Did the speaker avoid scientific jargon, explain terminology and provide adequate background information to illustrate points?
- Did the speaker have sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range; maintain a steady pace, and have a confident stance?

Regarding the Judging Panel

To provide every entrant with a similar experience, the following will be considered when composing our judging panel.

- Between three to five judges on the panel, at the preliminary competition level, and five to eight for the university event.
- Balanced judging panel by age, gender, academic/professional positions, and discipline.
- While judges should declare any conflict of interest, they should still vote on each 3MT presenter's oration, even if the presenter is from their discipline.
  https://3mt.wsu.edu/judgingcriteria/