

3MT Competitor Guide
USF Department of Physics

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Table of contents

Information on 3MT	3
What is 3MT	
History of Competition	
Why Participate	
Competition Eligibility	4
Competition Rules	4
Judging Criteria	4
Main Categories	
Scoring	
Judging Panel	
Competition Awards	6
Registration Process & Information	6
Dates & Deadlines	7
Preparing for 3MT Competition	7
Your 3MT Slide	8
Your 3MT Presentation	8
Contact Information	9

Introduction to 3MT

The 3MT competition is a research communication competition developed by the University of Queensland, Australia. The exercise celebrates the exciting research conducted by graduate students and develops academic, presentation, and research communication skills and supports the development of students' capacities to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialized audience.

In this competition, graduate students will have three minutes to present a compelling oration on their dissertation/current research and its significance. 3MT is not an exercise in trivializing or 'dumbing-down' research, but forces students to consolidate their ideas and crystalize their research discoveries.

History of 3MT

The first 3MT was held at the University of Queensland in 2008 with 160 students competing. Enthusiasm for the 3MT concept grew and its widespread implementation by universities has led to the development of an international competition. As a result, 3MT competitions are now held in over 600 universities across more than 59 countries worldwide.

Strong support for 3MT exists in North America with over 100 institutions, including USF, participating in the annual regional and national competitions. The global reach of the competition can be seen by the extent of participation with universities in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Zambia, and Vietnam also hosting local 3MT events.

In Spring 2015, University of South Florida hosted the first 3MT event at the university. Since then, winners have emerged from different programs within the College of Arts and Sciences, with some even proceeding to represent USF at the regional 3MT competition the following spring. However, in the 7 years since inception, no student from the Applied Physics program has emerged winner at the university level.

Why Participate

Skills development for research students.

Participating in 3MT develops academic, presentation and research communication skills, while developing research candidates' ability to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to a non-specialized audience.

Building intra-departmental research culture.

3MT provides a valuable opportunity for graduate students to come together in person, get to know one another, and talk about their research. It also provides a supportive environment and presentation skills training.

Building external relations for the department/program.

3MT winners may go on to represent the department at university, state, national, and international 3MT competitions which provides an excellent networking and professional development opportunity. Previous 3MT finalists at USF have benefited from invitations to a variety of other networking events following their participation in the competition.

Preparation for Graduate Research Day event hosted by the PGSC in the fall.

The 3MT competition is a practice event for students to get used to speaking in front of large audiences and a judge panel about their research in preparation for the Graduate Research Day event hosted by PGSC and the physics department in the fall.

Competition Eligibility

Currently enrolled graduate students (masters or PhD track) in the Applied Physics program at the University of South Florida will be eligible to participate in the 3MT.

Competition Rules

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted (no slide transitions, animations, or 'movement' of any description).
- 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).
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

Judging Criteria

Each competitor will be assessed on the judging criteria listed below. Each criterion is equally weighted and has an emphasis on audience.

Comprehension and Content: Did the presentation help the audience understand the research? Was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate for an intelligent but non-specialized audience? This criterion is further outlined below:

- Presentation provided clear background and significance to the research question.
- Presentation clearly described the research strategy/design and the results/findings of the research.
- Presentation clearly described the conclusions, outcomes, and impact of the research.
- The presentation followed a clear and logical sequence.
- The thesis topic, key results and research significance, and outcomes were communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialized audience.
- The speaker avoided scientific jargon, explained terminology, and provided adequate background information to illustrate points.
- The presenter spent adequate time on each element of their presentation – or the presenter elaborated for too long on one aspect.

Engagement and Communication: Did the oration make the audience want to know more? This criterion is further outlined below:

- The oration made the audience want to know more.
- The oration was delivered clearly, and the language was appropriate for a non-specialized audience.
- The presenter was careful not to trivialize or generalize their research to a great extent. ● The PowerPoint slide was well-defined and enhanced the presentation.
- The presenter conveyed enthusiasm for their research and captured and maintained the audience's attention.
- The speaker had sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range, maintained a steady pace, and had a confident stance.

Scoring

First Place and Runner-Up Awards

- Adjudicating panel determines the First Place and Runner-up winners.
- Judges give competitors scores for two categories (detailed above). Scores are tallied for each competitor.
- Competitors with the top two scores are named First Place and Runner-up.

People's Choice Awards

- An important aspect of the competition is the People's Choice prize. Following all presentations, the audience is asked to vote on who they thought gave the most

convincing 3MT presentation (based on their understanding of the criteria outline above).

- Audience members determine People's Choice winner.
- Each member of the audience gets one vote by using an Outlook survey form. A QR code will be printed for easy access at the event.
- The competitor with the most audience votes is the People's Choice winner.
- The People's Choice winner cannot also win First Place or Runner-Up prize.

Judging Panel

To provide every entrant with a similar experience, we will be taking the following into consideration when composing the judging panel.

- The panel will tentatively include seven judges: two undergraduate/REU students, two senior graduate students, one non-academic staff, one post-doc, and one faculty member.
- The panel will be balanced based on demographic segmentation, academic/professional levels and/or positions, and studied disciplines.
- Judges must declare any conflict of interest with presenters while ranking and remain unbiased.
- Judges must provide each presenter written feedback. Forms will be provided.

Competition Awards

Prizes are an important incentive for candidates entering the competition. The PGSC wishes to seek sponsorship from the department to fund the competition prizes. Below are the proposed prize categories and amounts.

- **Winner** — \$250 Cash Prize
- **Runner-up** — \$150 Cash Prize
- **People's Choice** (*selected by the audience*) — \$100 Cash Prize

Registration Process & Information

Applicants must submit the following information to register for the competition by Sunday, July 17th at midnight. Applicant presentation order is randomly drawn/assigned.

- Name • Email
- Year in Program & Track
- Short Summary of Presentation (< 100 words abstract)
- Major Area of Research
- Affiliated Research Lab/Principal Investigator (major advisor). • Dietary Restrictions

Registration Form: [Registration Link](#)

PowerPoint Slide Submission Form: [Submission Form](#)

Dates & Deadlines

- **Application opens:** Monday, July 3rd, 2023
- **Application closes:** Monday, July 31st, 2023 at midnight
- **Submit PowerPoint Slides:** Monday, August 7th
- **Competition Program Released:** Monday, August 7th (tentative)
- **Competition Date:** Friday, August 18th, 2023 ~ 10:00 am to 3:00 pm (tentative times)

Preparing for 3MT Competition

Drafting your presentation

- Write for your audience.
- Avoid jargon and academic language.
- Explain concepts and people important to your research – you may know all about Professor Smith's theories, but your audience may not.
- Highlight the outcomes of your research and the desired outcome.
- Imagine that you are explaining your research to a close friend or fellow student from another field.
- Convey your excitement and enthusiasm for your subject.

Tell a story

- You may like to present your 3MT as a narrative, with a beginning, middle and end.
- It's not easy to condense your research into three minutes, so you may find it easier to break your presentation down into smaller sections.
- Try writing an opener to catch the attention of the audience, highlight your different points, and finally have a summary to restate the importance of your work.

Have a clear outcome in mind

- Know what you want your audience to take away from your presentation.
- Try to leave the audience with an understanding of what you're doing, why it is important, and what you hope to achieve.

What not to do

- Do not write your presentation like an academic paper.
- Try to use shorter words, shorter sentences, and shorter paragraphs (be concise).
- You can use humor, however, be careful not to devalue your presentation or distract the audience.

Revise

- Proof your 3MT presentation by reading it aloud to yourself and to an audience of friends and family.
- Ask for feedback from faculty and students.
- Ask your audience if your presentation clearly highlights what your research is about and why it is important.

Your 3MT slide

Rules

Before you start work on your slide, you should take the following rules into account:

- One single static PowerPoint slide is permitted.
- No slide transitions, animations or ‘movement’ of any description are permitted.
- No additional electronic media (e.g., sound and video files) are permitted.
- If you need to reference a picture, image, or any kind of content in your slide, you can do it at the bottom of the slide in a small box with smaller sized font.
- Make sure to cite all important references and resources used.

Suggestions

You may like to consider some of the following suggestions.

- **Less is more:** text and complicated graphics can distract your audience – you don’t want them to read your slide instead of listening to your 3MT.
- **Personal touches:** personal touches can allow your audience to understand the impact of your research.
- **Creativity drives interest:** do not rely on your slide to convey your message – it should simply complement your oration.
- **Work your message:** think about how your slide might be able to assist with the format and delivery of your presentation – is there a metaphor that helps explain your research?

- An engaging visual presentation can make or break any oration, so make sure your slide is legible, clear, and concise.

Your 3MT presentation

Practice, practice, practice

- Feeling nervous before you present is natural, and a little nervousness can even be beneficial to your overall speech. Nonetheless, it is important to practice so you can present with confidence and clarity. Practicing will also help you gauge the timing of your 3MT so that you keep within the time limit.

Vocal range

- Speak clearly and use variety in your voice.
- Do not rush – find your rhythm.
- Remember to do a short pause at key points as it gives the audience time to think about what you are saying.
- Try to avoid using fillers (like, basically, umm, you know, etc.)

Body language

- Stand straight and confidently.
- Hold your head up and make eye contact or look towards back of the room.
- Never turn your back to the audience.
- Practice how you will use your hands and move around the stage. It is okay to move around energetically if that is your personality, however it is also appropriate for a 3MT presentation to be delivered from a single spot on stage.
- Do not make the common mistakes of rolling back and forth on your heels, pacing for no reason, or playing with your hair as these habits are distracting for the audience.

Record yourself

- Record and listen to your presentation to hear where you pause, speak too quickly, or get it just right.
- Work on your weaknesses and exploit your strengths.

Look to the stars!

- Watch your role models such as academics, politicians, and journalists, and break down their strengths and weaknesses.
- Analyze how they engage with their audience.
- View presentations by previous 3MT finalists.

Dress

- Try to dress business casual or professionally. If you are unsure of how to dress you may like to dress for a job interview or an important meeting. It is important that you feel comfortable so you can focus on your presentation.
- Do not wear a costume of any kind as this is against the rules (as is the use of props).

Contact Information

For more information concerning the competition, please contact:

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