



Tips for effective design and use of the 3-minute thesis slide

The audience will have a full 3 minutes to absorb your slide. It needs to actively contribute to your talk, rather than simply provide a backdrop.

1. Keep it simple

The slide should support you as you talk, but should not take over. It will be physically bigger than you, but your energy, enthusiasm and expertise should make the bigger impact. Remember that the slide will be present throughout your talk, so if it is too complex the audience will spend too long decoding it and not listening to you. Select content that takes seconds to understand and is 'readable' when viewed from the back of a large room.

2. Choose an eye-catching visual

Is there is a specific image that sets the scene for your project? It may be a molecule, an object, a diagram, a landscape, a philosopher, an artwork... on the other hand it could be a key finding in graphic form. You could think of this as the equivalent of your brand logo. It helps to make you and your project more memorable, not only in this competition, but also on conference posters, or in illustrated talks you may give in the future.

3. Do you want to switch the focus: speaker→slide→speaker?

A dynamic speaker will first engage the audience, then take them on a journey, verbally, visually, or both. In some successful 3-minute thesis presentations the speaker lets the slide speak for itself and does not refer to it. This can work if the image is easily accessible for the audience and gives a clear idea of the focus of the project. In other presentations there is a 15-30 second section when the audience is invited to switch their attention from the speaker to the slide in order that specific aspects of the research can be explained.

If you choose the second option, plan the moment when you want to switch the focus to the slide. Can the image(s) you present help to explain complex ideas? Can it provide an effective visual summary of the scope, trajectory, highlights, or anticipated outcome of your project? How (and when) will you bring the focus back onto you?