



## Graduate Research Symposium

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### What is a Lightning Talk?

## What are lightning talks?

Lightning talks are very short presentations usually given at professional conferences and forum. Speakers are restricted to a short time limit and use relatively few Powerpoint slides. Rather than go into detail of every aspect of their research, speakers focus on one or two key takeaways they want their audience to understand. The goal is to spark inspiration, further conversation, and collaboration.

## Tips for effective lightning talks

- Embrace the format. You have 10 minutes. What about your research can you clearly communicate in that time? What is the most important or interesting thing you want them to know? Build a narrative around that goal and leave the rest out.
- Focus on 1-2 aspects of your research that you want to share. For instance, you might focus on your methodologies, challenges, important results, or relevance to the field.
- You have time to say four or five major points, so choose what best evidence, data, or visuals best support your narrative.
- Simple and clear is generally better in both narrative and visuals.
- Do NOT compress a twenty minute or forty minute presentation into 10 minutes.
  - Do not speed talk to get through a longer presentation.
  - Consider starting your presentation from scratch rather than cutting another presentation down.
- Use a small number of slides with very little text.
  - If you have an existing presentation, use only 2-4 slides.
  - Use slides and text to supplement your talk. Don't just read from the screen.
- Practice.
  - Rehearse aloud and time yourself.
  - Cut anything that does not support your key points.

## Additional Resources

- [Tips for Lightning Talks](#)
- [Creating Effective Lightning Talk Slides](#)
- [Lightning Talks: Science in 5 minutes or less](#)

This article from the preeminent scholarly journal Nature discusses how Lightning Talks are being used by professionals and includes tips for creating effective presentations.