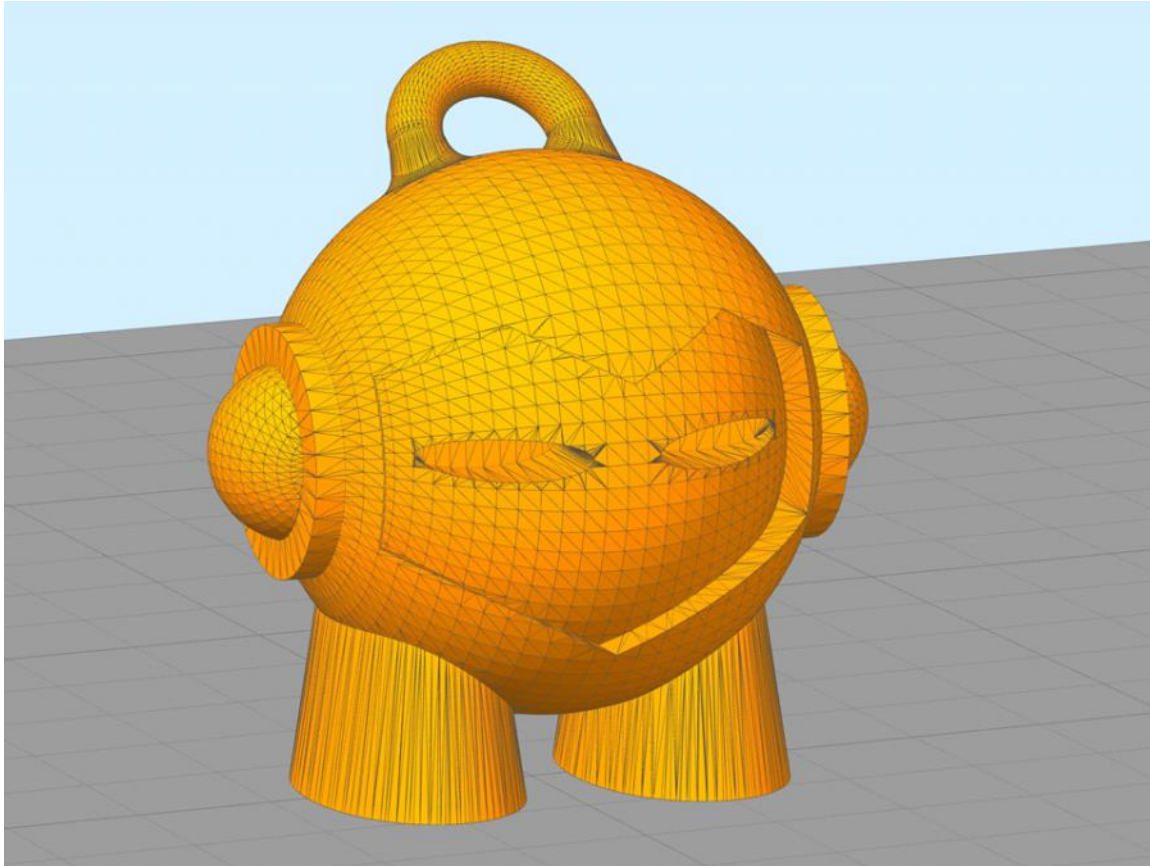# 3D Printing 101: Flow, STLs and Gcodes
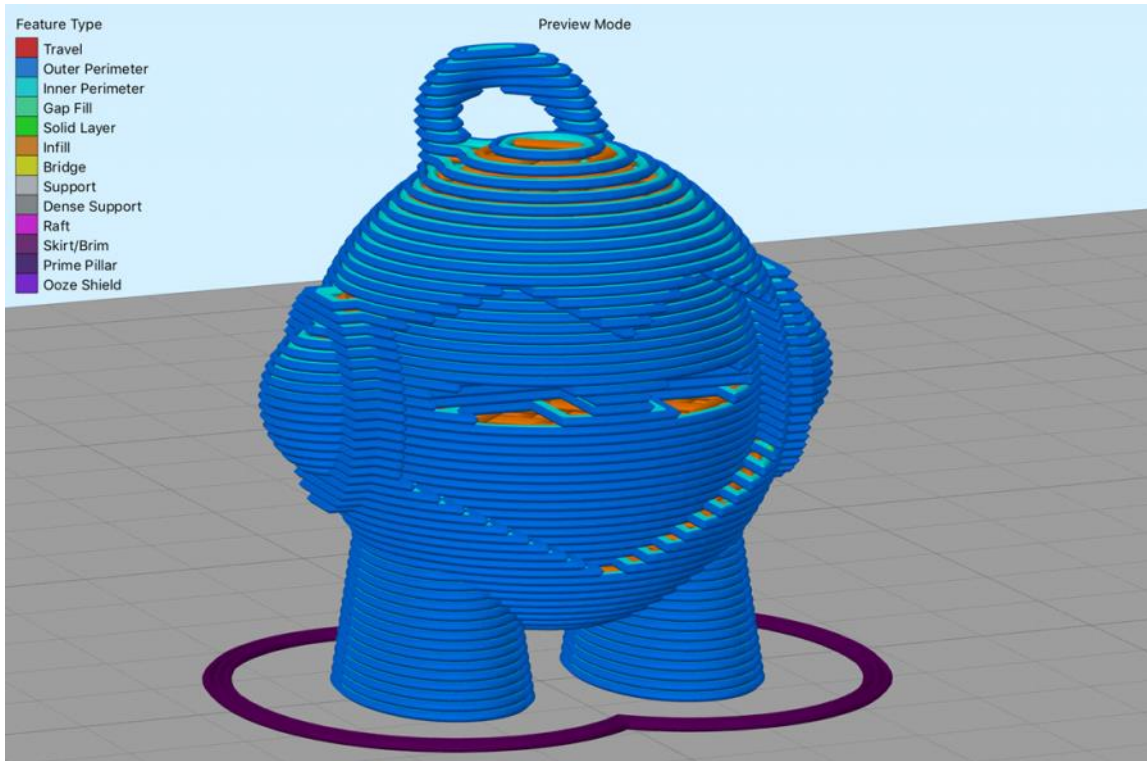
Note: Some pictures in this guide are from the brilliant [overview of 3D printing by 3D hubs](). Highly recommended reading and thanks for the FDM overview pic!

3D Model (STL) → Slice the model (GCODE) → Print that thing
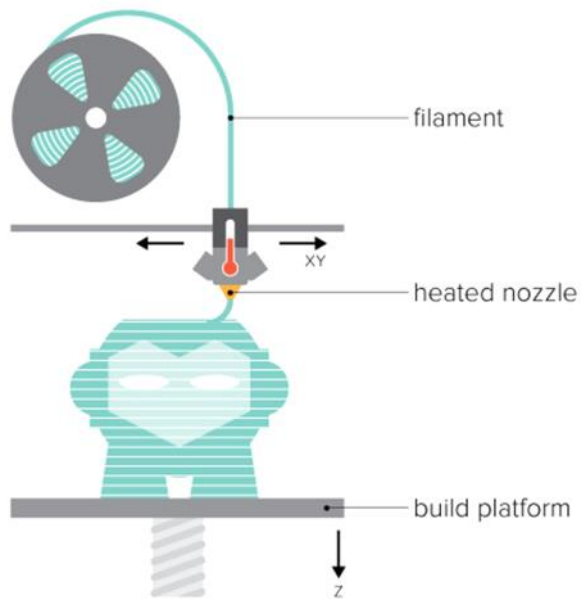
At the beginning, there was a 3D model. The most popular format for 3D models is STL, which is a simple representation of an object's surface.
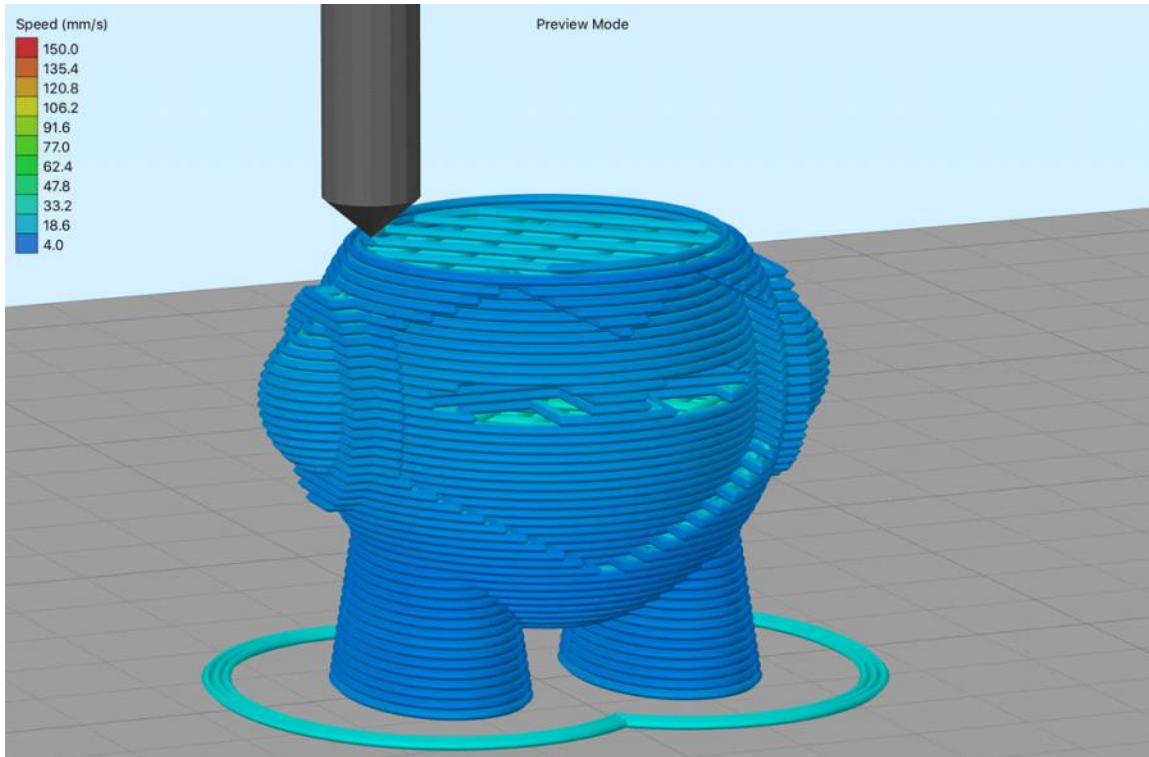

But 3D printers do not understand STLs. They need more precise instructions what to do. So first you "slice" the STL with a slicing program (refer to our "Slice STL in Cura 2+" guide) into "gcode," which a language that 3D printers understand.

Then you tell the 3D printer to print the GCODE.

If all goes well and you set up the printer right hardware wise, you end up with the 3D object: