# Organizing Your Research Proposal

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This document is to help writers outline the essential components of a research proposal. Not all sections will be included for every discipline, so use this document as a template or guide and then share it with your supervisor for discussion and feedback.

## Title

What are some keywords for your research?

## Introduction

Start with a short statement that establishes the overall area of concern. Avoid too much detail. Get to the point. Communicate only information essential for the reader’s comprehension. Avoid unnecessary technical language and jargon. Answer the question, “What is this study about?”

Questions to consider:

* What is your topic area, and what is the problem within that topic?
* What does the relevant literature say about the problem? – Be selective and focused.
* What are the critical, theoretical, or methodological issues directly related to the problem to be investigated?
* What are the reasons for undertaking the research? – This is the answer to the “so what?” question.

### Broad topic

Briefly describe the broad topic of your research area.

### Focus of study

Explain the narrowed focus of your specific study.

### Problem

Identify the problem that you are investigating in your study.

### Gap(s) in knowledge

What is unknown in this specific research area? This is what your study will explore and where you will attempt to provide new insights.

## Rationale

Justify your research. Convince your reader that the problem has been appropriately defined and that the study is worth doing. Be explicit and detailed. Develop your argument logically and provide evidence.

## Research Question or Hypothesis

Foreshadow outcomes of your research. What is the question you are hoping to answer? What are the specific hypotheses to be tested and/or issues to be explored?

* Use questions when research is exploratory.
* Use declarative statements when existing knowledge enables predictions.

### Subsidiary Questions (if applicable):

### Purpose statement

* State the purpose of your research. Be succinct and simple.
* Why do you want to do this study? What is your research trying to find out?

### Goals for proposed research

Write a broad statement of what you hope to accomplish (e.g., Improve something… Understand something…). Are there specific measurable outcomes that you will accomplish in your study?

## Background or Context

* Briefly state what you already know and introduce literature most relevant to your research.
* Indicate main research findings, methodologies, and interpretations from previous related studies.
* Discuss how your question or hypothesis relates to what is already known.
* Position your research within the field’s developing body of knowledge.
* Explain and support your choice of methodology or theoretical framework.

## PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Explain how you will conduct this research. Specify scope and parameters (e.g., geographic locations, demographics). Limit your inclusion of literature to only essential articles and studies.

Questions to consider:

* How will these methods produce an answer to your research question?
* How do the methods relate to the introduction and literature review?
* Have you done any previous work (or read any literature) that would inform your choices about methodology?
* Are your methods feasible and adequate? How do you know?
* What obstacles might you encounter in conducting the research, and how will you overcome them?

### Object(s) of study

Provide detail about your objects of study (e.g., pigs, literary texts, government policies, children, health care systems).

### Participants/population

Who/what are they? What are the limitations for selection? How will you find/select them? How feasible is it to find/select them?

### Theoretical frame (if applicable)

Explain the theories your research draws from or builds upon.

### Materials and apparatus

What are your survey or interview methods? (You may include a copy of questionnaires, etc.) Do you require any special equipment? How do you plan to purchase or construct or obtain this equipment?

### Procedure and design

What exactly will you do? Include variables selected or manipulated, randomization, controls, the definition of coding categories, etc. How will subjects be assigned to experimental conditions? What precautions will be used to control possible confounding variables?

### Data analysis and statistical procedures

How do you plan to statistically analyze your data? What analyses will you conduct? How will the analyses contribute to the objectives?

## PROPOSED ANALYSES OR EXPECTED RESULTS

What are the expected outcomes from your methods? Describe your expected results in relation to your hypothesis. Support these results using existing literature.

* What results would prove or disprove your hypotheses and validate your methodology, and why?
* What obstacles might you encounter in obtaining your results, and how will you deal with those obstacles?

## SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTIONS, IMPACT, AND SIGNIFICANCE

Convince the reader that this research will be useful and relevant. Answer the question “so what?”

### Specific Contributions

How will your expected results specifically contribute to fulfilling the objectives and/or goals of your research? How will your research contribute to the larger topic area or research discipline?

### Impact/Significance

How will this research extend other work that you have done? Will these be direct or indirect contributions? – theoretical or applied? Who else might find your research useful and relevant? (e.g., other research streams, policy makers, professional fields, etc.)

## REFERENCES

Provide a list of some of the most important sources that you will need to use for the introduction and background sections, plus your literature review and theoretical framework. Attach to your proposal as a separate page.

## TABLES AND FIGURES

What visuals might you use to help illustrate the methods or expected results?

## ABSTRACT

Briefly state the research problem, methods used, and the proposed analyses or expected results. Write this section after you have completed drafting the proposal.

## QUESTIONS FOR REVISIONS

### Clarity and Concision:

* Do you have clear subjects and verbs in every sentence?
* Can you say what you mean in fewer words?
* Are any sentences longer than 3 lines?
* Do you define your key terms?

### Organization:

* Do you provide a clear outline for your reader?
* Do you use clear sub-headings to delineate sections?

### Voice and Style:

* Who is your intended audience?
* Have you used too much technical language and jargon?
* Is your writing formal and academic?
* Have you used active voice rather than passive voice where possible?
* Do you provide clear transitions between sections?
* Are your sentence structures repetitive or varied?
* Are your word choices consistent?
* Do you appear passionate about your topic?

### Length and Format:

* How long should your proposal be?
* Do you need to include references and a bibliography?
* What citation format is required?

### Submission:

* What is your deadline?
* Have you proofread for grammar and punctuation errors?
* Have you had someone else review your drafts?
* Do you have enough time to revise and incorporate feedback?