

## **HOW TO WRITE YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

Your proposal should include the following:

### **1. TITLE**

- Your title should give a clear indication of your proposed research approach or key question

### **2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

You should include:

- the background and issues of your proposed research
- a brief introduction/context of study
- a summary of key debates and developments in the field

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTION(S)**

You should formulate these clearly, giving an explanation as to what problems and issues are to be explored and why they are worth exploring (*see resources in literature review section*)

### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

You should provide an outline of:

- the theoretical resources to be drawn on
- the research approach (theoretical framework)
- the research methods appropriate for the proposed research
- a discussion of advantages as well as limits of particular approaches and methods (quantitative vs qualitative)

### **5. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

You should include:

- a preliminary list of references to key articles and texts discussed within your research proposal
- a preliminary selection of sources appropriate to the proposed research

## **HOW TO WRITE YOUR RESEARCH METHOD SECTION**

Published on February 25, 2019 by Shona McCombes. Revised on July 18, 2022 by Tegan George.

Your **research methodology** discusses and explains the data collection and analysis methods you used in your research. A key part of your thesis, dissertation, or research paper, the methodology section explains what you did (or what you will do) and how you did it (or how you will do it), allowing readers to evaluate the reliability and validity of your research.

It should include:

- The type of research you conducted
- How you collected and analyzed your data
- Any tools or materials you used in the research
- Why you chose these methods
- Your methodology section should generally be written in the past tense in the final paper, but in future tense as part of this assignment.

### **Why is a methods section important?**

Your methods section is your opportunity to share how you conducted your research and why you chose the methods you chose. It's also the place to show that your research was rigorously conducted and can be replicated.

It gives your research legitimacy and situates it within your field, and also gives your readers a place to refer to if they have any questions or critiques in other sections.

### **Step 1: Explain your methodological approach**

You can start by introducing your overall approach to your research. You have two options here.

#### **Option 1: Start with your “what”**

What research problem or question did you investigate?

- Aim to describe the characteristics of something?
- Explore an under-researched topic?
- Establish a causal relationship?

And what type of data did you need to achieve this aim?

- Quantitative data, qualitative data, or a mix of both?
- Primary data collected yourself, or secondary data collected by someone else?

#### **Option 2: Start with your “why”**

Depending on your discipline, start with a discussion of the rationale and assumptions underpinning your methodology. In other words, why did you choose these methods for your study?

- Why is this the best way to answer your research question (survey, interviews, secondary data)?
- Is this a standard methodology in your field, or does it require justification?

- Were there any ethical considerations involved in your choices?
- What are the criteria for validity and reliability in this type of research?

## **Step 2: Describe your data collection methods**

Once you have introduced your reader to your methodological approach, you should share full details about your data collection methods.

### **Quantitative methods**

In order to be considered generalizable, you should describe quantitative research methods in enough detail for another researcher to replicate your study.

Here, explain how you operationalized your concepts and measured your variables. Discuss your sampling method or inclusion/exclusion criteria, as well as any tools, procedures, and materials you used to gather your data.

### **Surveys**

Describe where, when, and how the survey was conducted.

- How did you design the questionnaire?
- What form did your questions take (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale)?
- Were your surveys conducted in-person or virtually?
- What sampling method did you use to select participants?
- What was your sample size and response rate?

### **Existing data**

Explain how you gathered and selected the material (such as datasets or archival data) that you used in your analysis.

- Where did you source the material?
- How was the data originally produced?
- What criteria did you use to select material (e.g., date range)?

## **HOW TO WRITE DATA COLLECTION AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS SECTION**

For a good structure and organization of your research, keep in mind these aspects:

- Start your research results section by restating the purpose of your research, so that your readers can re-focus on core of your academic article
- Specifically tell the reader how you collected data (remember to use your last assignment, the research methodology section as you have most of this information)
- Include helpful and quality tables, figures, graphs that can synthesize your research
- Make sure you include details about your data analysis and interpretation, as well as statistical significance tests
- Use the past tense when describing to your research results
- Do not use vague terms and be as concise as possible when you are reporting your research findings
- Conclude your section with a short paragraph that summarizes your study's key outcomes and implication

## HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Narrow your topic and select papers accordingly

---

Consider your specific area of study. Think about what interests you and what interests other researchers in your field.

Talk to your professor, brainstorm, and read lecture notes and recent issues of periodicals in the field.

Limit your scope to a smaller topic area (ie. focusing on Iceland's role in Sustainable Tourism development instead of focusing on Tourism Development in general).

Think of a funnel, the literature review should introduce the topic at a macro level (sustainable tourism development- what is it, pros and cons, etc) and move into a micro level focus (sustainable tourism development in Iceland- trends, pros, cons, sustainable development in Reykjavík)

- [Four Steps to Narrow Your Research Topic \(Video\)](#)

This 3-minute video provides instructions on how to narrow the focus of your research topic.

- [Developing a Research Question + Worksheet](#)

Use this worksheet to develop, assess, and refine your research questions. There is also a downloadable PDF version.

### 2. Search for literature

---

Define your source selection criteria (ie. articles published between a specific date range, focusing on a specific geographic region, or using a specific methodology).

Using keywords, search a library database.

Reference lists of recent articles and reviews can lead to other useful papers.

Include any studies contrary to your point of view.

### 3. Read the selected articles thoroughly and evaluate them

---

Evaluate and synthesize the studies' findings and conclusions.

Note the following:

- Assumptions some or most researchers seem to make
- Methodologies, testing procedures, subjects, material tested researchers use
- Experts in the field: names/labs that are frequently referenced
- Conflicting theories, results, methodologies
- Popularity of theories and how this has/has not changed over time

### 4. Organize the selected papers by looking for patterns and by developing subtopics

Note the following:

- Findings that are common/contested
- Important trends in the research
- The most influential theories

Tip: If your literature review is extensive, find a large table surface, and on it place post-it notes or filing cards to organize all your findings into categories.

- Move them around if you decide that (a) they fit better under different headings, or (b) you need to establish new topic headings.
- Develop headings/subheadings that reflect the major themes and patterns you detected

## 5. Develop a thesis or purpose statement

---

Write a one or two sentence statement summarizing the conclusion you have reached about the major trends and developments you see in the research that has been conducted on your subject.

- Templates for Writing Thesis Statements

This template provides a two-step guide for writing thesis statements. There is also a downloadable PDF version.

- 5 Types of Thesis Statements

Learn about five different types of thesis statements to help you choose the best type for your research. There is also a downloadable PDF version.

- 5 Questions to Strengthen Your Thesis Statement

Follow these five steps to strengthen your thesis statements. There is also a downloadable PDF version.

## 6. Write the paper

---

Follow the organizational structure you developed above, including the headings and subheadings you constructed.

Make certain that each section links logically to the one before and after.

Structure your sections by themes or subtopics, not by individual theorists or researchers.

- Tip: If you find that each paragraph begins with a researcher's name, it might indicate that, instead of evaluating and comparing the research literature from an analytical point of view, you have simply described what research has been done.

Prioritize analysis over description.

- For example, look at the following two passages and note that Student A merely describes the literature, whereas Student B takes a more analytical and evaluative approach by comparing and contrasting. You can also see that this evaluative approach is well signaled by linguistic markers indicating logical connections (words such as "however," "moreover") and phrases such as "substantiates the claim that," which indicate supporting evidence and Student B's ability to synthesize knowledge.

Student A: Smith (2000) concludes that personal privacy in their living quarters is the most important factor in nursing home residents' perception of their autonomy. He suggests that the physical environment

in the more public spaces of the building did not have much impact on their perceptions. Neither the layout of the building nor the activities available seem to make much difference. Jones and Johnstone make the claim that the need to control one's environment is a fundamental need of life (2001), and suggest that the approach of most institutions, which is to provide total care, may be as bad as no care at all. If people have no choices or think that they have none, they become depressed.

Student B: After studying residents and staff from two intermediate care facilities in Calgary, Alberta, Smith (2000) came to the conclusion that except for the amount of personal privacy available to residents, the physical environment of these institutions had minimal if any effect on their perceptions of control (autonomy). However, French (1998) and Haroon (2000) found that availability of private areas is not the only aspect of the physical environment that determines residents' autonomy. Haroon interviewed 115 residents from 32 different nursing homes known to have different levels of autonomy (2000). It was found that physical structures, such as standardized furniture, heating that could not be individually regulated, and no possession of a house key for residents limited their feelings of independence. Moreover, Hope (2002), who interviewed 225 residents from various nursing homes, substantiates the claim that characteristics of the institutional environment such as the extent of resources in the facility, as well as its location, are features which residents have indicated as being of great importance to their independence.

- [How to Integrate Critical Voice into Your Literature Review \(Video\)](#)

## 7. Review your work

---

- Look at the topic sentences of each paragraph. If you were to read only these sentences, would you find that your paper presented a clear position, logically developed, from beginning to end? The topic sentences of each paragraph should indicate the main points of your literature review.
- Make an outline of each section of the paper and decide whether you need to add information, to delete irrelevant information, or to re-structure sections.
- Read your work out loud. That way you will be better able to identify where you need punctuation marks to signal pauses or divisions within sentences, where you have made grammatical errors, or where your sentences are unclear.
- Since the purpose of a literature review is to demonstrate that the writer is familiar with the important professional literature on the chosen subject, check to make certain that you have covered all of the important, up-to-date, and pertinent texts. In the sciences and some of the social sciences it is important that your literature be quite recent; this is not so important in the humanities.
- Make certain that all of the citations and references are correct and that you are referencing in the appropriate style for your discipline. If you are uncertain which style to use, ask your professor.
- Check to make sure that you have not plagiarized either by failing to cite a source of information, or by using words quoted directly from a source. (Usually if you take three or more words directly from another source, you should put those words within quotation marks, and cite the page.)
- Text should be written in a clear and concise academic style; it should not be descriptive in nature or use the language of everyday speech.
- There should be no grammatical or spelling errors.
- Sentences should flow smoothly and logically.

## **HOW TO WRITE THE DRAFT PAPER**

This draft paper is about putting all you have worked on thus far all together! Sections should include at minimum and in order:

- **Introduction** The Introduction section of the manuscript should include a thorough description of the issue of focus and sufficient background information as to establish its context in the industry. A ‘problem statement’ or ‘thesis’ should concisely summarize the problem or issue the authors’ intend to address.

- **Industry Context** Also referred to as Research or Literature Review. In this section author(s) will present relevant information which informs the problem identified by the ‘problem statement’ in the Introduction. Author(s) should seek to establish context for the issue of interest within the industry as a whole, and to identify the root causes and consequences of the issue for various stakeholders. Information included in this section may include direct observation, readings, interviews, or a combination of other primary and secondary sources.

- **Discussion** As the main body of the paper, the Discussion section is where author(s) should describe their methodology (if relevant) or approach to understanding the issue of focus. Any findings, and their possible implications, should be fully articulated.

- **Conclusion** In the Conclusion section, author(s) will restate the major themes of the paper, highlight key findings and suggest how the findings might answer the issue identified in the ‘problem statement.’ Strengths and short comings of the findings should be identified as well as opportunities for future study if needed. Particular attention should be given to providing a recommendation for how the findings can be used by industry practitioners and operationalized in a real-world setting.