

Research Proposal Notes

The research proposal can serve many useful functions.

- The most important is that it helps you to think out the research project you are about to undertake and predict any difficulties that might arise.
- For those who aren't quite sure what their focus will be, the research proposal can be a space to explore options -- perhaps with one proposal for each potential topic (which can then be more easily compared and evaluated than when they are still just ideas in one's head).
- Research proposals can be effective starting places to discuss projects with your professors, too.
- A professor who is initially skeptical about a project may be able to imagine it more easily after reading a well written research proposal (this doesn't mean he or she will approve the topic, especially if there are significant potential difficulties that you haven't considered).
- Once you have begun your research project, a research proposal can help you to remain on track -- and can also remind you why you started this project in the first place!
- Researchers very often begin to lose heart about two thirds of the way into a project when their research hits a snag or when they are having problems developing a thesis, organizing the ideas, or actually starting to write.
- Rereading the initial research proposal, especially "Significance" can reenergize the project or help the researcher to refocus in an effective manner. [See drafting and revising the research paper for more on this aspect of the project.]

1. **Research Title** (your name, your mentor's name and department, institution)
2. **Problem Statement** (introduction and purpose of research with cited references to support the problem)
3. **Justification/Importance of the project** (understand your research topic in order to explain to the general public. Express your voice and select an aspect/portion of the research that is important or interesting to you to highlight and explore. Define the terms that pertain to your research.
4. **Hypotheses and/or Research Question** (focus research questions and provide more expansion of your question. Because of the timeframe of the project – limit to one thoroughly focused question to explore)
5. **Sources of literature review** (identify at least 7 sources that explain how your research builds on what has already been reported in the literature. Citations should be documented accurately.)

6. **Methods of Data Gathering/Methodology** (experiment, descriptive, or historical – survey, activity analysis, trend study, program evaluation, follow-up study, document (content) analysis, case study, ethnographic (field) study, comparative and correlational, replication or meta-analysis) Data collection tools – tests/inventories, observations, inquiry forms, interviews. Who are your subjects/participants?
7. **Data Analysis Procedures** (qualitative – literary criticism, interpretation, thematic coding, coding) quantitative – interpretation of statistical results, graphical displays of data, naming factors/clusters in factor analysis & cluster analysis)
8. **Outline of Project Activities** (timeline & calendar)
9. **References** (List all references utilized to this point to develop the research proposal.