

Outline Guide to Written Proposals for Research

This outline is intended as a flexible guide to preparing a written research proposal for any research. The various elements below may be modified if necessary by combining, rearranging, expanding or contracting.

Elements of a Research Proposal

I. Title:

Should include both topic and method (e.g. “The effect of mass communication on drinking/driving behavior: a controlled field experiment”).

II. Purposes:

- a. Introduction: What do you wish to study? A paragraph or two briefly and informally elucidating the topic.
- b. Personal Reasons: Why do you wish to study this topic? A paragraph or two informally describing how the idea occurred to you, why you got interested in it.
- c. Utility: Who or what is likely to benefit from this study, and in what ways?
- d. Distinctiveness: How is your study different from, better than, other information or research on the topic? Is it something new or a modification or replication of another study? This section should tie in a bit with the literature review (see below)

III. The Problem:

- a. Question: A precise statement in question form of the problem to be solved (e.g., “Does mass communication have any effect on drinking/driving behavior?”). Also any sub-questions that may be answered in the process (e.g., “Are young people more susceptible than older ones to such influences? What kinds of messages are most effective? ”).
- b. Definitions Of Terms: Theoretical/conceptual definitions of all important terms in the study.
- c. Assumptions and Limitations: What is it necessary for you to assume to be able to do the study, and what are some of the problem? In other words, what are you not studying?

IV. **Review Of the Literature:**

Integrative narrative summary of the academic and professional literature related to your study, summarizing how whatever you're doing on important elements such as design and data collection method, definition of terms and appropriate findings. The literature review may be prefaced with a brief narrative explaining your methods of selection of sources already searched and to be searched, and a complete bibliography must be appended to the paper (see documentation below).

V. **Statement Of Hypotheses:** 假説(must be verified or proved later)

Hypotheses should follow from your question statements in III-an above. (e.g., H1: Newspaper advertising has no effect on drinking/driving behavior. H2: Women are more likely to pay attention to newspaper advertising safety messages than men.)

A reminder: The best hypotheses are specific, predictive and directional (i.e. predict positive or negative relationships).

Further, the theoretical rationale, if not elaborated in your literature review, problem statement or question statement section, for each hypothesis, must be clear. In other words, why, theoretically, does it make sense?

VI. **Operational Plan:**

- a. Research method to be used, including: 1.design; 2.data collection methods and specific techniques; 3.specification of independent and dependent variables, with operational definitions of each, if appropriate; 4.population to be studied; 5.sampling method; 6.interview schedule/questionnaire formulation/description of experimental stimuli/content analysis coding categories, as appropriate.
- b. Justification of selection of your methods listed VI-a as opposed to others; discussion of limitations imposed by your methods.
- c. Plan of analysis and interpretation. Include dummy tables.
- d. Feasibility of operational plan in terms of time, personnel, cost, etc.

Documentation

Any widely recognized documentation/footnoting system, such as the Modern Languages Association (MLA), University of Chicago (Turabian) or American Psychological Association (APA) style is acceptable, but some standard style must be used.

A bibliography must be appended to the paper; it may be of one of two types, including (a) only those sources actually cited in the paper or (b) all sources consulted, whether or not they are cited in the paper.

The most common citation system in the social sciences is the APA style, which refers to author and year of publication in the text of the paper (and page number where direct quotation is used), reserving footnotes for information and elaboration only.

Some examples:

- a. Normal in-text citation: “In one study (Jones, 1963), no significant relationship was found.....”
- b. Author’s name a part of text: “Jones (1963) found no significant relationship.....”
- c. Quotation: “As Jones (1963:422) has noted, ‘The rain.....’”
- d. Two publications by same author in same year: “Two studies (Jones, 1964a; Jones 1964b) noted.....” (Bibliographic entry also labels which is which.)
- e. Two authors: (Jones and Smith, 1965)
- f. Three or more authors: (Jones, et al., 1966) (Bibliographic entry lists all authors’ names).

Bibliographic entries are arranged alphabetically by last name; year of publication immediately follows author name(s). Where one author is listed more than once, list most recent entry first and move backwards chronologically.