

Basics of a Research Proposal

A **research proposal** is a concise and coherent summary of your proposed project. It:

- Sets out the central questions you are exploring
- Outlines the general area of study within which your research falls—how does your research fit into the bigger picture of what we already know?



The research proposal generally includes:

- Explanation of proposed research
what will be done
- Methods and techniques to be employed
how it will be done
- Novelty and/or importance of the study
why it should be done

Why should I write a proposal?

- Thinking everything through like this helps improve your science and plans
- Allows for constructive criticism of your ideas by yourself and others
- Can get money to do research
- Can get a license to do your research
- Helps to organize and plan your project

Parts of a Proposal

1. TITLE: Provides a quick summary of your work

E.g. *Plant Biodiversity after Wildland Forest Fires in the Mackenzie Delta, NWT.*

2. ABSTRACT: A brief description of your hypothesis and the goals of your research. It should include the research question, and serves as a short summary of your entire proposal.

3. INTRODUCTION: This section should give a general overview of your ideas and project, and lay the groundwork for the rest of your proposal. It should also answer some key questions, including: What is the hypothesis you are testing? What are the questions you would like to answer? Based on what is already known in this field, what do you expect to see and hope to show through your results?

4. LITERATURE REVIEW: This section should present what researchers already know about the subject you are interested in—what is interesting in the field that led to your research idea? Are there any debates between other researchers about topics in this field, or something we still don't know?

Your literature review should use tons of other sources, particularly academic journal articles. Make sure you cite everything!



5. MATERIALS AND METHODS: This section should be detailed enough so a reader can both understand if your methodology is good and, if they so choose, repeat your experiments almost exactly to test if they get the same results. It should be *very detailed*.

Things to consider including:

- Your geographic research area
- What processes will you use?
- What equipment and/or supplies will you need?
- What kind of *research design* did you use?
- Who will take part in your study? How did you recruit the participants?
- What kind of measurements or questionnaires did you use? Why did you choose them?
- How will you carry out your study? What activities does it involve? How long does it take?
- Include maps of the study area of proposed sample collection sites if relevant

6. TIMELINE: This can be a short section but it should provide an overview of the timeline of your project.

An example timeline template:

Task	Details	Completion Date
Write literature review and research proposal		January 2021
Secure Research Licensing	What licenses will we need? ENR, ARI, PWCHC?	April 2021
Prepare tests/experiments	Need to buy a recorder for interviews	May 2021
Start field work/interviews/experiments		June 2021
Complete field work/interviews/experiments		September 2021
Compile and organize data		October 2021
Interpret data and start writing an article		January 2022

7. CONCLUSIONS AND JUSTIFICATION: Your literature review will already have helped the reader understand why your topic is important, but this is where you explicitly say how your research will advance knowledge. Why does your research deserve funding? Will your work potentially change practices or policies?

8. LITERATURE CITED: You must include all the resources that were used to help you develop your idea and write the proposal. You can use any style you like, as long as it is consistent!



If you'd like to know more about the basics of proposal writing, please see some of these links below:

[Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Writing a Research Proposal](https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal). August 6, 2020, University of Southern California. Retrieved September 14, 2020, from <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>.

[Ten tips for writing your research proposal](https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/progress-tracking/proposals). McGill University. Retrieved September 8, 2020, from <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/progress-tracking/proposals>.

[Writing a Scientific Research Proposal](https://www.mhc.ab.ca/services/academicsupport/~media/a6c5e5b4dc184e8d8c72d72ec7032a2c.ashx). Medicine Hat College. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://www.mhc.ab.ca/services/academicsupport/~media/a6c5e5b4dc184e8d8c72d72ec7032a2c.ashx>.

Gibson, Spencer. [How to write a Research Grant? Or How to get a grant rejected?](https://www.umanitoba.ca/institutes/manitoba_institute_cell_biology/MICB/Forms/How%20to%20write%20a%20Research%20Proposal.ppt) University of Manitoba. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from https://www.umanitoba.ca/institutes/manitoba_institute_cell_biology/MICB/Forms/How%20to%20write%20a%20Research%20Proposal.ppt.