



Sam Houston Writing Center 

How to Write an Effective Research Proposal

What is a proposal?

- A suggestion for a course of action which is usually followed by some type of research project.

What is the purpose of a proposal?

- A proposal serves to persuade a committee of scholars (or one's professor) that the project captures the reader's attention and is worthy of being pursued. While its purpose is to persuade, it should also convince the reader that the suggested solution is practical and appropriate.

What should the proposal contain?

- **The proposal should answer three key questions:**
 1. What are we going to learn as the result of the proposed project that we do not know now?
 2. Why is it worth knowing?
 3. How will we know that the conclusions are valid?
- **The proposal should aim for clarity:**
 1. Avoid confusing jargon.
 2. Restrict the use of technical language to specific words that lack an equivalent in common language.
 3. Keep the spotlight on ideas.
 4. Simplify the main text by putting complex secondary material into appendices.
 5. Remain precise and succinct.
- **The proposal should establish the context:**
 1. Detail what will be discussed as well as what will be learned as a result of your project.
 2. Summarize the current scholarship and thinking on the issue.
 3. Contain complete and up-to-date references that demonstrate thorough bibliographic research.
 4. Exhibit a past consultation with those experienced in that particular field of research.

- **The proposal should explain the benefits associated with the project:** explain the importance of the project as the researcher demonstrates awareness of alternative viewpoints.
- **The proposal should use a fresh approach:**
Some things to consider including in a proposal are:
 1. Surprises, puzzles and apparent contradictions to powerfully persuade the reader.
 2. Uncommon topics, those that have not been excessively explored; if you must use common topics, be sure you have something original to discuss.
- **The proposal should describe your methodology:**
The proposal should prove that the researcher both possesses the knowledge and expertise in technical matters and has the resources needed. Two things are important to remember concerning this:
 1. Tell exactly how you plan to spend your time during the research period.
 2. Explain why your methodology is appropriate. You should also include the resources you will be able to access to implement your methodology.
- **The proposal should specify your objectives by describing the final product of the project, which may include:**
 1. A course paper, a thesis, an article, a dissertation, a case study, etc.
 2. Be very explicit in what the reader should expect as a result of your research and include all requested enclosures and appendices.

How should the proposal be constructed?

- Evidence should be introduced in a descending order of importance, with the most important evidence occurring first and the least important evidence occurring last.
- The introduction should present and summarize the issue you intend to explore and how you plan to go about doing so.
- The body should explain the complete details of the solution by including the statement of the problem, the proposed solution(s), and the program of implementation. Also, include which sources you plan to use as well as how they will be utilized. Incorporate conclusions and recommendations.
- The conclusion should emphasize the benefits that the reader will realize from your solution to the problem while also urging the reader to take action in an encouraging, confident and assertive tone.