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HOW TO WRITE A SEMINAR PAPER

A seminar paper is a work of original research that presents a specific thesis and is presented to a group of interested peers, usually in an academic setting. For example, it might serve as your cumulative assignment in a university course. Although seminar papers have specific purposes and guidelines in some places, such as law school, the general process and format is the same. The steps below will guide you through the research and writing process of how to write a seminar paper and provide tips for developing a well-received paper.

Learn the basic features of a seminar paper

A seminar paper is an advanced piece of research writing, but it shares many of the same features as a regular research paper. Before you begin writing your seminar paper, it is important to make sure that you understand how a seminar paper differs from a research paper. Unlike a basic research paper, a seminar paper also requires:

- an argument that makes an original contribution to the existing scholarship on your subject
- extensive research that supports your argument
- extensive footnotes or endnotes (depending on the documentation style you are using)

Ask for clarification if needed

While you may have written many papers in the past, it is important to make sure that you understand the details of your current assignment before you get started. As soon as your instructor assigns the paper, read the guidelines carefully and highlight anything that you do not understand. Ask your instructor to clarify the instructions if anything seems unclear or if you just don't understand the assignment. You may also consider talking to your instructor about your intended topic to make sure that you are on the right track.

- Make sure that you understand how to cite your sources for the paper and how to use the documentation conventions your department prefers, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago Style.
- Don't feel bad if you have questions. It is better to ask and make sure that you understand than to do the assignment wrong and get a bad grade.

Plan ahead

Your teacher will be expecting original analysis, extensive research, and excellent writing. Therefore, it is important that you get started early and do the best work that you can do. Begin working on the paper as soon as it is assigned and take advantage of your university's writing centre for extra help.

- Since it's best to break down a seminar paper into individual steps, creating a schedule is a good idea. You can adjust your schedule as needed.
- Do not attempt to research and write a seminar in just a few days. This type of paper requires extensive research, so you will need to plan ahead. Get started as early as possible.

Generate ideas for your seminar paper

Before you begin writing your paper, you should take some time to explore your ideas and get some things down on paper. As with other types of writing, basic invention activities like listing, free writing, clustering, and questioning can help you to develop ideas for your seminar paper.

Listing

List all of the ideas that you have for your essay (good or bad) and then look over the list you have made and group similar ideas together. Expand those lists by adding more ideas or by using another prewriting activity.

- **Free writing**

Write nonstop for about 10 minutes. Write whatever comes to mind and don't edit yourself. When you are done, review what you have written and highlight or underline the most useful information. Repeat the freewriting exercise using the passages you underlined as a starting point. You can repeat this exercise multiple times to continue to refine and develop your ideas.

- **Clustering**

Write a brief explanation (phrase or short sentence) of the subject of your seminar paper on the centre of a piece of paper and circle it. Then draw three or more lines extending from the circle. Write a corresponding idea at the end of each of these lines. Continue developing your cluster until you have explored as many connections as you can.

- **Questioning**

On a piece of paper, write out "Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?" Space the questions about two or three lines apart on the paper so that you can write your answers on these lines. Respond to each question in as much detail as you can.

Create a research question to help guide your research

A research question is what you will attempt to answer with your research. Creating a research question will help you to stay focused as you research your topic. It can also serve as the starting point for your thesis later on.

- For example, if you wanted to know more about the uses of religious relics in medieval England, you might start with something like "How were relics used in medieval England?" The information that you gather on this subject might lead you to develop a thesis about the role or importance of relics in medieval England.
- Keep your research question simple and focused. Use your research question to narrow your research. Once you start to gather information, it's okay to revise or tweak your research question to match the information you find. Similarly, you can always narrow your question a bit if you are turning up too much information.

Collect research for your paper. In order to find support for your argument, you will need to gather information from a variety of sources. See your assignment guidelines or ask your instructor if you have questions about the types of sources that are appropriate for your seminar paper. Books, articles from scholarly journals, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and trustworthy websites are some sources that you might consider using. You might begin by doing some background research and then move into some more focused research as you learn more about your topic.

Use your library's databases, such as EBSCO or JSTOR, rather than a general internet search. University libraries subscribe to many databases. These databases provide you with free access to articles and other resources that you cannot usually gain access to by using a search engine. If you don't have access to these databases, you can try Google Scholar

Evaluate your sources to determine their credibility

It is important to use only trustworthy sources in a seminar paper, otherwise you will damage your own credibility as an author. Using the library's databases will also help to ensure that you are getting plenty of trustworthy sources for your paper. There are several things that you will need to consider in order to determine whether or not a source is trustworthy.

Publication's credentials

Consider the type of source, such as a peer-reviewed journal or book. Look for sources that are academically based and accepted by the research community. Additionally, your sources should be unbiased.

- **Author's credentials** Choose sources that include an author's name and that provide credentials for that author. The credentials should indicate something about why this person is qualified to speak as an authority on the subject. For example, an article about a medical condition will be more trustworthy if the author is a medical doctor. If you find a source where no author is listed or the author does not have any credentials, then this source may not be trustworthy.[12]

- **Citations** Think about whether or not this author has adequately researched the topic. Check the author's bibliography or works cited page. If the author has provided few or no sources, then this source may not be trustworthy.

- **Bias**

Think about whether or not this author has presented an objective, well-reasoned account of the topic. How often does the tone indicate a strong preference for one side of the argument? How often does the argument dismiss or disregard the opposition's concerns or valid arguments? If these are regular occurrences in the source, then it may not be a good choice.

Publication date

Think about whether or not this source presents the most up to date information on the subject. Noting the publication date is especially important for scientific subjects, since new technologies and techniques have made some earlier findings irrelevant.

Information provided in the source

If you are still questioning the trustworthiness of this source, cross check some of the information provided against a trustworthy source. If the information that this author presents contradicts one of your trustworthy sources, then it might not be a good source to use in your paper.

Read your research

Once you have gathered all of your sources, you will need to read them. Read your sources very carefully. Read the sources multiple times if necessary and make sure that you fully understand them. Misunderstanding and misrepresenting your sources can damage your credibility as an author and also have a negative effect on your grade.

- Give yourself plenty of time to read your sources and work to understand what they are saying. Ask your professor for clarification if something is unclear to you.
- Consider if it's easier for you to read and annotate your sources digitally or if you'd prefer to print them out and annotate by hand.

Take notes while you read your sources

Highlight and underline significant passages so that you can easily come back to them. As you read, you should also pull any significant information from your sources by jotting the information down in a notebook. Indicate when you have quoted a source word for word in your notes by putting it into quotation marks and including information about the source such as the author's name, article or book title, and page number.

- Be careful to properly cite your sources when taking notes. Even accidental plagiarism may result in a failing grade on a paper

Write a thesis

Once you have developed your ideas for your seminar paper and read your sources, you should be ready to write your thesis statement.

Effective thesis statements express your argument in a clear, direct manner. Remember that a thesis should not be more than one sentence in length.

Make sure that your thesis presents an original point of view. Since seminar papers are advanced writing projects, be certain that your thesis presents a perspective that is advanced and original.

For example, if you conducted your research on the uses of relics in medieval England, your thesis might be, "Medieval English religious relics were often used in ways that are more pagan than Christian."

Develop a rough outline based on your research notes

Writing an outline before you begin drafting your seminar paper will help you organize your information more effectively. You can make your outline as detailed or as scant as you want.

Just keep in mind that the more detail you include in your outline, the more material you will have ready to put into your paper.

Organize your outline by essay part and then break those parts into subsections. For example, part 1 might be your introduction, which could then be broken into three sub-parts: a)opening sentence, b)context/background information c)thesis statement.

Hook your readers from the beginning. Your first sentence should be interesting enough that your readers will want to know more. Your introduction should also be engaging. Begin discussing your topic right away and help your readers understand your position in the first paragraph of your paper. Think about what you will discuss in the rest of your paper in order to help you determine what you should include in your introduction. Use your introduction to create a framework for your paper, explaining where your research fits into current thought on your topic and why your ideas matter.

For example, in a paper about medieval relics, you might open with a surprising example of how relics were used or a vivid description of an unusual relic.

Keep in mind that your introduction should identify the main idea of your seminar paper and act as a preview to the rest of your paper.

Provide relevant background information to guide your readers

Providing adequate background information or context will help to guide your readers through your essay. Think about what your readers will need to know in order to understand the rest of your paper and provide this information in your first paragraph. Do your readers need to know about the history of your subject? Do they need to know what other scholars have written on the subject? The information your readers will need to know will depend on your subject and the argument you plan to make.

- For example, in a paper about relics in medieval England, you might want to offer your readers examples of the types of relics and how they were used. What purpose did they serve? Where were they kept? Who was allowed to have relics? Why did people value relics?
- Keep in mind that your background information should be used to help your readers understand your point of view

Present your claims and research in an organized fashion

Rather than trying to talk about multiple aspects of your topic in a single paragraph, make sure that each body paragraph focuses on a single claim or piece of evidence. Your discussion of each of these separate items should help to prove your thesis. For each body paragraph, you should do the following:

- Remember to use topic sentences to structure your paragraphs. Provide a claim at the beginning of each paragraph. Then, support your claim with at least one example from one of your sources. Remember to discuss each piece of evidence in detail so that your readers will understand the point that you are trying to make.

Consider using headings and/or subheadings to organize your paper.

Since seminar papers are often upwards of 10 pages, many writers use headings and/or subheadings to help organize their paper. These headings/subheadings help readers follow your argument by showing them what each section is about before they start reading.

- For example, in a paper on medieval relics, you might include a heading titled “Uses of Relics” and subheadings titled “Religious Uses”, “Domestic Uses”, “Medical Uses”, etc.

Conclude your paper

Concluding a seminar paper can be difficult, especially if you have presented a long, complex argument. There are several ways that you can conclude that will be helpful and interesting to your readers. Before you write your conclusion, spend some time reflecting on what you have written and try to determine the most logical way to end your paper. Some possibilities for concluding your paper include:

- *Synthesize what you have discussed.* Put everything together for your readers and explain what other lessons might be gained from your argument. How might this discussion change the way others view your subject?

- ***Explain why your topic matters.*** Help your readers to see why this topic deserve their attention. How does this topic affect your readers? What are the broader implications of this topic? Why does your topic matter?
- ***Return to your opening discussion.*** If you offered an anecdote or a quote early in your paper, it might be helpful to revisit that opening discussion and explore how the information you have gathered implicates that discussion.

Create your references

Follow your instructor's directions for making your references. Make sure that you use the correct style and that you have cited all of your sources. Before you finish with your essay, you will need to make sure that you have cited all of your sources. Not citing sources using in-text citations or a works cited page may be considered plagiarism and lead to failure of the paper or even the course

Ask your professor what documentation style he or she prefers that you use if you are not sure.

Visit your school's writing centre for additional help with your works cited page and in-text citations.

Give yourself adequate time to revise

Just as you should plan to begin working on your paper as early as possible, you should also plan to finish early. You will need to allow yourself plenty of time to do a thorough revision of your paper, so plan to finish your paper at least a few days before the due date. Giving yourself plenty of time can help you avoid simple mistakes as well as some major problems such as poor logic or faulty arguments.

Wait a few days before revising your paper.

By taking a break after you have finished drafting your paper, you will give your brain a rest. When you revisit the draft, you will have a fresh perspective. It is important to begin writing a paper far enough ahead of time to allow yourself a few days or even a week to revise before

it is due. If you do not allow yourself this extra time, you will be more prone to making simple mistakes and your grade may suffer as a result.[26]

Revise your paper

Revision is different from proofreading. When you revise your paper, you are thinking about the content and consider how you might improve the content. Proofreading helps you correct minor problems such as grammar and punctuation errors. As you revise your paper, you should consider multiple aspects of your writing to make sure that your readers will be able to understand what you have written. For example, you might create a reverse outline from your text to see how well you presented your argument.[27] Consider the following questions as you revise:

- What is your main point? How might you clarify your main point?
- Who is your audience? Have you considered their needs and expectations?
- What is your purpose? Have you accomplished your purpose with this paper?
- How effective is your evidence? How might you strengthen your evidence?
- Does every part of your paper relate back to your thesis? How might you improve these connections?
- Is anything confusing about your language or organization? How might you clarify your language or organization?
- Have you made any errors with grammar, punctuation, or spelling? How can you correct these errors?
- What might someone who disagrees with you say about your paper? How can you address these opposing arguments in your paper?

Proofread a printed version of your paper

Read your paper out loud to make sure that it is polished and ready for your professor to read it. Use your final read through as a chance to weed out any typos, grammatical errors, wordy or incomplete sentences, and other minor mistakes that may have a negative effect on your grade. Highlight or circle these errors and revise as necessary before printing your final copy.

Important Points to Remember

- When coming up with a specific thesis, begin by arguing something broad and then gradually grow more specific in the points you want to argue.
- Choose a topic that interests you, rather than something that seems like it will interest others. It is much easier and more enjoyable to write about something you care about.
- Keep accurate and detailed notes on your sources. If possible, write your paper while still able to look at the sources so that you can ensure that you have accurate quotes and that you are not plagiarizing.
- When conducting original research, it's always a good idea to approach your research topic from several angles. Use search terms that might seem illogical at first and seek out books and papers that are not directly related to your topic. Often, relevant information is buried within otherwise unimportant sources.
- Keep in mind that seminar papers differ by discipline. Although most seminar papers share certain features, your discipline may have some requirements or features that are unique. For example, a seminar paper written for a Chemistry course may require you to include original data from your experiments, whereas a seminar paper for an English course may require you to include a literature review. Check with your student handbook or check with your advisor to find out about special features for seminar papers in your program. Make sure that you ask your professor about his/her expectations before you get started as well.[29]

Warnings

- Do not be afraid to admit any shortcomings or difficulties with your argument. Your thesis will be made stronger if you openly identify unresolved or problematic areas rather than glossing over them.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense in the academic world. If you plagiarize your paper you may fail the assignment and even the course altogether. Make sure that you fully understand what is and is not considered plagiarism before you write your paper. Ask your teacher if you have any concerns or questions about your school's plagiarism policy.

Easy and Simple Steps for Writing a Good Seminar Paper

Seminars are considered one of the most significant academic activities that take place at least for two to three times in every academic year as they help students in getting some useful knowledge about their respective study area and also in learning development and communication skills that help them in their future professional life.

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In every seminar, a person, or we can say the author, presents his or her research to a group of students who are of the same study field. The author presents his or her research not to just showcase his knowledge about the topic they have studied, but also to share their knowledge and experiences with students so they can learn from it. This research paper serves as a base for the author's oral presentation at the educational seminar.

Research Paper or a Seminar Paper

The research paper that an author shares with students in a seminar is usually termed as a seminar paper. A good seminar paper reflects the author's command over the topic he/she has studied and also provides new ideas and information about the researched topic.

If you are going to write your research paper, but are worried because of lack of knowledge and experience, then the following guidelines will be of great help to you as discussed below are a few tips regarding writing a good research paper for the seminar or for business problem solution essay.

- ❖ Start your work by selecting a good topic for your research paper and for this you will first need to understand the theme of the seminar that what it is about and then according to it, choose your topic.
- ❖ Find out useful literature about your descriptive topic that you can present in the seminar. Make sure the literature you are collecting about your topic is free of ambiguity, true and up to date according to the latest developments.
- ❖ Take notes about the potential problems that you can discuss in your research paper.

- ❖ Generate a thesis statement about your selected problem. Try to present it in an argumentative manner in order to make it interesting for your audience.
- ❖ Include some supportive facts and arguments in support of your thesis.
- ❖ Discuss what you have found out in your research about your selected topic.
- ❖ Conclude the findings in a meaningful manner.
- ❖ Once you are done with doing all above-mentioned things, write your research in a proper report form. A research paper for seminar usually includes an abstract, introduction, main text, results, and references.

The main characteristics for good quality research are listed below:

- It is based on the work of others.
- It can be replicated and doable.
- It is generalizable to other settings.
- It is based on some logical rationale and tied to theory. ...
- It generates new questions or is cyclical in nature.
- It is incremental.

What is Research: Definition

Research is about a careful consideration of study regarding a particular concern or problem using scientific methods. According to the American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie, “Research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the observed phenomenon. Research involves inductive and deductive methods.”

Inductive research methods are used to analyse an observed event. Deductive methods are used to verify the observed event. Inductive approaches are associated with qualitative research and deductive methods are more commonly associated with quantitative research

Research is conducted with a purpose to understand:

- What do organizations or businesses really want to find out? (In our context, English language speaking, listening, reading or writing skills proficiency development)
- What are the processes that need to be followed to chase the idea?

- What are the arguments that need to be built around a concept?
- What is the evidence that will be required for people to believe in the idea or concept?

Characteristics of research

1. A systematic approach must be followed for accurate data. Rules and procedures are an integral part of the process that set the objective. Researchers need to practice ethics and a code of conduct while making observations or drawing conclusions.
2. Research is based on logical reasoning and involves both inductive and deductive methods.
3. The data or knowledge that is derived is in real time from actual observations in natural settings.
4. There is an in-depth analysis of all data collected so that there are no anomalies associated with it.
5. Research creates a path for generating new questions. Existing data helps create more opportunities for research.
6. Research is analytical in nature. It makes use of all the available data so that there is no ambiguity in inference.
7. Accuracy is one of the most important aspects of research. The information that is obtained should be accurate and true to its nature. For example, laboratories provide a controlled environment to collect data. Accuracy is measured in the instruments used, the calibrations of instruments or tools, and the final result of the experiment.

Basic research

A basic research definition is data collected to enhance knowledge. The main motivation is knowledge expansion. It is a non-commercial research that doesn't facilitate in creating or inventing anything. For example: an experiment to determine a simple fact.

Applied research

Applied research focuses on analyzing and solving real-life problems. This type refers to the study that helps solve practical problems using scientific methods. Studies play an important role in solving issues that impact the overall well-being of humans. For example: finding a specific cure for a disease

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a process that is about inquiry. It helps create in-depth understanding of problems or issues in their natural settings. This is a non-statistical method.

Qualitative research is heavily dependent on the experience of the researchers and the questions used to probe the sample. The sample size is usually restricted to 6-10 people. Open-ended questions are asked in a manner that encourages answers that lead to another question or group of questions. The purpose of asking open-ended questions is to gather as much information as possible from the sample.

The following are the methods used for qualitative research:

1. One-to-one interview
2. Focus groups
3. Ethnographic research
4. Content/Text Analysis
5. Case study research

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is a structured way of collecting data and analysing it to draw conclusions. Unlike qualitative methods, this method uses a computational and statistical process to collect and analyse data. Quantitative data is all about numbers.

Quantitative research involves a larger population — more people means more data. With more data to analyse, you can obtain more accurate results. This method uses close-ended questions because the researchers are typically looking to gather statistical data.

Online surveys, questionnaires, and polls are preferable data collection tools used in quantitative research. There are various methods of deploying surveys or questionnaires.

Online surveys allow survey creators to reach large amounts of people or smaller focus groups for different types of research that meet different goals. Survey respondents can receive surveys on mobile phones, in emails, or can simply use the internet to access surveys.

There are three purposes of research

1. **Exploratory:** As the name suggests, exploratory research is conducted to explore a group of questions. The answers and analytics may not offer a final conclusion to the perceived problem. It is conducted to handle new problem areas which haven't been explored before. This exploratory process lays the foundation for more conclusive research and data collection.
2. **Descriptive:** Descriptive research focuses on expanding knowledge on current issues through a process of data collection. Descriptive studies are used to describe the behavior of a sample population. In a descriptive study, only one variable is required to conduct the study. The three main purposes of descriptive research are describing, explaining, and validating the findings. For example, a study conducted to know if top-level management leaders in the 21st century possess the moral right to receive a huge sum of money from the company profit.
3. **Explanatory:** Explanatory research or causal research is conducted to understand the impact of certain changes in existing standard procedures. Conducting experiments is the most popular form of casual research. For example, a study conducted to understand the effect of rebranding on customer loyalty.

To understand the characteristic of research design using research purpose here is a comparative analysis:

	Exploratory Research	Descriptive Research	Explanatory Research
Research approach used	Unstructured	Structured	Highly structured
Research conducted through	Asking research questions	Asking research questions	By using research hypotheses.
When is it conducted?	Early stages of decision making	Later stages of decision making	Later stages of decision making

Research method is defined as the tools or instruments used to accomplish the goals and attributes of a study. Think of the methodology as a systematic process in which the tools or instruments will be employed. There is no use of a tool if it is not being used efficiently.

Research begins by asking the right questions and choosing an appropriate method to investigate the problem. After collecting answers to your questions, you can analyse the findings or observations to draw appropriate conclusions.

When it comes to customers and market studies, the more thorough your questions, the better. By thoroughly collecting data from customers through surveys and questionnaires, you get important insights into brand perception and product needs. You can use this data to make smart decisions about your marketing strategies to position your business effectively.

Research methods are broadly classified as Qualitative and Quantitative.

Both methods have distinctive properties and data collection methods.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is a method that collects data using conversational methods. Participants are asked open-ended questions. The responses collected are essentially non-numerical. This method not only helps a researcher understand what participants think but also why they think in a particular way.

Types of qualitative methods include:

- ***One-to-one Interview:*** This interview is conducted with one participant at a given point in time. One-to-one interviews need a researcher to prepare questions in advance. The researcher asks only the most important questions to the participant. This type of interview lasts anywhere between 20 minutes to half an hour. During this time the researcher collects as many meaningful answers as possible from the participants to draw inferences.
- ***Focus Groups:*** Focus groups are small groups comprising of around 6-10 participants who are usually experts in the subject matter. A moderator is assigned to a focus group who facilitates the discussion amongst the group members. A moderator's experience in conducting the focus group plays an important role. An experienced moderator can probe the participants by asking the correct questions that will help them collect a sizable amount of information related to the research.
- ***Ethnographic Research:*** Ethnographic research is an in-depth form of research where people are observed in their natural environment without This method is demanding due to the necessity of a researcher entering a natural environment of other people. Geographic locations can be a constraint as well. Instead of conducting interviews, a researcher experiences the normal setting and daily life of a group of people.
- ***Text Analysis:*** Text analysis is a little different from other qualitative methods as it is used to analyse social constructs by decoding words through any available form of documentation. The researcher studies and understands the context in which the documents are written and then tries to draw meaningful inferences from it. Researchers today follow activities on a social media platform to try and understand patterns of thoughts.

- **Case Study:** Case study research is used to study an organization or an entity. This method is one of the most valuable options for modern. This type of research is used in fields like the education sector, philosophical studies, and psychological studies. This method involves a deep dive into ongoing research and collecting data.

Quantitative Research Methods

Quantitative methods deal with numbers and measurable forms. It uses a systematic way of investigating events or data. It is used to answer questions in terms of justifying relationships with measurable variables to explain, predict, or control a phenomenon.

There are three methods that are often used by researchers:

- **Survey Research** — The ultimate goal of survey research is to learn about a large population by deploying a survey. Today, online surveys are popular as they are convenient and can be sent in an email or made available on the internet. In this method, a researcher designs a survey with the most relevant survey questions and distributes the survey. Once the researcher receives responses, they summarize them to tabulate meaningful findings and data.
- **Descriptive Research** — Descriptive research is a method which identifies the characteristics of an observed phenomenon and collects more information. This method is designed to depict the participants in a very systematic and accurate manner. In simple words, descriptive research is all about describing the phenomenon, observing it, and drawing conclusions from it.
- **Correlational Research** — Correlational research examines the relationship between two or more variables. Consider a researcher is studying a correlation between cancer and married women have a negative correlation with cancer. In this example, there are two variables: cancer and married women. When we say negative correlation, it means women who are married are less likely to develop cancer. However, it doesn't mean that marriage directly avoids cancer.

Identifying Research Methodology

To choose the appropriate types of research, you need to clearly identify the objectives. Some objectives to take into consideration for your business include:

- Find out the needs of your clients.
- Know their preferences and understand what is important to them.
- Find an appropriate way to make your customers aware of your products and services.
- Find ways to improve your products or services to suit the needs of your customers.

After identifying what you need to know, you should ask what research methods will offer you that information.

Organize your questions within the framework of the 7 Ps of marketing that influence your company – product, price, promotion, place, people, processes, and physical tests.

A well-organized customer research process produces valid, accurate, reliable, timely, and complete results. Results that rigorously reflect the opinions and needs of your clients will help you grow your sales and improve your operations. To obtain the results, you need to establish and follow the processes that you have detailed out for your organization:

Set your goals

Consider the client's objectives and define those that identify with yours. Make sure that you set smart goals and objectives. Do not presume the results of your surveys.

Plan your research

Good planning allows the use of creative and logical approaches to select the methods that gather the most accurate information. Your plan will be influenced by the type and complexity of the information you need, the skills of your market research team, and how soon you need the information. Your budget also plays a large role in your ability to collect data.

Collect and collate your results

Make a list of how you are going to carry out the research process, the data you need to collect, and collection methods. This will help you keep track of your processes and make sense of your findings. It will also allow you to verify that your research accurately reflects the opinions of your clients and your market. Create a record table with:

- The consumer research activity
- The necessary data
- The methods for data collection
- The steps to follow for data analysis.

Remember, research is only valuable and useful when it is valid, accurate, and reliable. Relying on imperfect research is dangerous. Incorrect results can lead to customer churn and a decrease in sales. (In educational research, incorrect results can lead to wrong decisions on the curriculum which adversely affects the quality of education)

It is important to obtain information about how the collection of customer information was carried out, and to ensure that your data is:

- Valid – founded, logical, rigorous, and impartial.
- Accurate – free of errors and including required details.
- Reliable – that can be reproduced by other people who investigate in the same way.
- Timely – current and collected within an appropriate time frame.
- Complete – includes all the data you need to support your business decisions.

Analyse and understand your research

Analysis of the data can vary from simple and direct steps to technical and complex processes. Adopt an approach, and choose the method of data analysis based on the methods you have carried out.

Keep the findings ready

Choose a spread sheet that allows you to easily enter your data. If you do not have a large amount of data, you should be able to manage them with the use of basic tools available in survey software. If you have collected more complete and complex data, you may have to consider using specific programs or tools that will help you manage your data.

Review and interpret the information to draw conclusions

Once you have gathered all the data, you can scan your information and interpret it to draw conclusions and make informed decisions. You should review the data and then:

- Identify the main trends and issues, opportunities, and problems you observe. Write a sentence describing each one.
- Keep track of the frequency with which each of the main findings appears.
- Make a list of your findings from the most common to the least common.
- Evaluate a list of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that have been identified in a SWOT analysis.
- Prepare conclusions and recommendations about your research.

Review your goals before making any conclusions about your research. Keep in mind how the process you have completed and the data you have gathered help answer your questions. Ask yourself if what your research revealed facilitates the identification of your conclusions and recommendations.

ELEMENTS OF A RESEARCH PAPER

A. Abstract

An **abstract** is a summary of a research paper. It contains the most essential details of your research, including the findings, methods, and conclusion. It is meant to help readers, who are often busy scientists, decide whether they wish to read the entire article and can be especially useful in case of pay walled articles. It also helps journal editors to determine whether to consider articles for peer review. It is written to give readers a sneak peek into your research and engage their interest, and so it should briefly encapsulate the entire study.

B. Introduction

Now let us understand what purpose the **Introduction** serves. The **Introduction** is the beginning of your research paper and provides background for your research topic, helping the reader understand the motivation for conducting the study. It sets the context for your research by introducing the research topic, providing a brief overview of previously published literature, identifying the gaps or problems that existing research has failed to address, and finally introducing the problem that you intend to solve, ideally via an explicit 'aim' statement at the end of the introduction—more on this in the next section!

C. Background of a Research Paper

The background of the study provides context to the information that you are discussing in your paper. Thus, the background of the study generates the reader's interest in your research question and helps them understand why your study is important. For instance, in case of your study, the background can include a discussion on how socio economic factors influence learning patterns or the disparity in academic performance among learners of grade 12. However, this is just an example, and you will be the best person to judge what information you would like to include in the background of your study.

Typically, the background of a study includes a review of the existing literature on the area of your research, leading up to your topic. Once you have discussed the contribution of other researchers in the field, you can identify gaps in understanding, that is, areas that have not been addressed in these studies. You can then explain how your study will address these gaps and how it will contribute to the existing knowledge in the field.

What is background of study?

The background of the study is a part of a research provided in the introduction section of the paper. The background of the study is a compilation of adequate information that is based on the analysis of the problem or proposed argument, the steps and methods needed to arrive at the design and the implementation of the results achieved and feasible solutions. It is different from the introduction. The introduction only contains the preliminary information

about your research question, or thesis topic and readers will be learning in your paper. It is simply and overviews the research question or thesis topic. But the background of your study is more in-depth and explains why your research topic or thesis is worth the time of your readers. Your paper background of study will provide your readers with context to the information talked about throughout your research paper. It can include both relevant and essential studies.

Research Proposals - Background

This section will be labelled differently depending on the guidelines. It addresses why the proposed work is important in the field, and answers the question, “so what?” In this section, provide the status quo of the relevant work field and identify a gap in knowledge or activities that must be filled to move the field forward. Sufficient details should be given in this discussion (1) to make clear what the research problem is and exactly what has been accomplished; (2) to give evidence of your own competence in the field; and (3) to show why the previous work needs to be continued.

Literature reviews should be selective and critical. Reviewers do not want to read through a voluminous working bibliography; they want to know the pertinent works and your evaluation of them. Discussions of work done by others should therefore lead the reader to a clear impression of how you will be building upon what has already been done and how your work differs from theirs. It is important to establish what is original in your approach (innovative), what circumstances have changed since related work was done, or what is unique about the time and place of the proposed research.

D. Statement of the Problem

The basics of writing a statement of the problem for your research proposal

Research is a systematic investigative process employed to increase or revise current knowledge by discovering new facts. It can be divided into two general categories:

(1) Basic research, which is inquiry aimed at increasing scientific knowledge, and

(2) Applied research, which is effort aimed at using basic research for solving problems or developing new processes, products, or techniques.

The first and most important step in any research is to identify and delineate the research problem: that is, what the researcher wants to solve and what questions he/she wishes to answer. A research problem may be defined as an area of concern, a gap in the existing knowledge, or a deviation in the norm or standard that points to the need for further understanding and investigation. Although many problems turn out to have several solutions (the means to close the gap or correct the deviation), difficulties arise where such means are either not obvious or are not immediately available. This then necessitates some research to reach a viable solution.

A ***statement of the problem*** is used in research work as a claim that outlines the problem addressed by a study. The statement of the problem briefly addresses the question: What is the problem that the research will address?

What are the goals of a statement of the problem?

The ultimate goal of a statement of the problem is to transform a generalized problem (something that bothers you; a perceived lack) into a targeted, well-defined problem; one that can be resolved through focused research and careful decision-making.

Writing a statement of the problem should help you clearly identify the purpose of the research project you will propose. Often, the statement of the problem will also serve as the basis for the introductory section of your final proposal, directing your reader's attention quickly to the issues that your proposed project will address and providing the reader with a concise statement of the proposed project itself.

What are the key characteristics of a statement of the problem?

A good research problem should have the following characteristics:

1. It should address a gap in knowledge.

2. It should be significant enough to contribute to the existing body of research
3. It should lead to further research
4. The problem should render itself to investigation through collection of data
5. It should be of interest to the researcher and suit his/her skills, time, and resources
6. The approach towards solving the problem should be ethical.
- 7.

E. Aims and Objectives of a Study

How is the “General Objective” of your research different from its “specific objectives”?

The **Aim (General objective)** of a study states the outcome that you hope to achieve from your study. It is a broad statement of the overall goals of your study and indicates where you hope to reach at the end of your research. The aim of your research encapsulates what you wish to find out or prove through your research. On the other hand, research **specific objectives** lay down the steps, that is, the specific or direct actions that you will take to achieve your aim. The **specific objectives** of your research lay down specific milestones or stages that you will reach in order to accomplish your goals. While the **aim** is a broad goal that you wish to accomplish, the **specific objectives** are small, precise steps that will guide you through your research path. In other words, the **aim** of your research paper states what you wish to achieve and the **specific objectives** indicate how you will achieve them, by identifying specific steps or milestones. Depending on the type of document you are writing, you might need to provide an aim, objectives, or both.

The following example will help you understand the two terms better.

The general objective of the study is to investigate the practice of teaching writing skills at secondary level, with particular reference to two governmental high schools of grade nine. To meet this goal the study will focus on the following specific objectives.

Specific Objectives:

This research has the following specific objectives because the researcher believes that addressing these objectives will help the teaching and learning process of writing skill.

1. To find out the approaches utilized by teachers in teaching writing skills.
2. To identify how well the teachers go through the different stages of the writing process.
3. To examine the problems that the teachers face regarding the teaching of writing skills.
4. To explore what roles teachers play while teaching writing skills.

F. Research Questions

A research problem is a broad issue that you would like to address through your research. It identifies a difficulty, doubt, or an area of concern, in theory or in practice, that requires thought and investigation. It is an anomaly, a limitation, or a troubling question in the real world that needs to be addressed. You can break your research problem into smaller questions that will help you move towards solving the problem.

Now let us understand what a research question is. A **research question** is the specific concern that you will answer through your research. It is derived from your research problem but is based on your study design. When you narrow down your research problem to a specific idea that points towards a feasible way to investigate or address your research problem, you get your **research question**. Specifying your research question is the first step in the direction of actually solving your research problem. You can then formulate the aim of your study based on your research question and accordingly decide the objectives of your research.

The following example helps to understand the issue better

The research is expected to address the following research questions and they will be measured by different methods of investigation and data gathering process.

1. Do teachers go through the different stages of the writing process?
2. What approaches do teachers use in teaching writing skills?
3. What are the problems that teachers encounter while teaching writing skills?
4. What roles do teachers play while teaching writing skills?

G. Significance of a Study

In simple terms, the significance of the study is basically the importance of your research. The significance of a study must be stated in the Introduction section of your research paper. While stating the significance, you must highlight how your research will be beneficial to the development of science and the society in general. You can first outline the significance in a broader sense by stating how your research will contribute to the broader problem in your field and gradually narrow it down to demonstrate the specific group that will benefit from your research. While writing the significance of your study, you must answer questions like:

- Why should your research be published?
- How will this study contribute to the development of your field?

What is the difference between “implications,” “limitations,” and “recommendations for future research”?

Research **implications, limitations, and recommendations** are important components of the Conclusion section, which summarizes your findings and sums up the essence of your research. Let us understand how each of these three terms differs from the other.

Implications are the conclusions that you have drawn from your research project. They suggest how the findings of your research can be useful, e.g., for further research and policy making. Through your implications, you can demonstrate how your research can be applied in real-life policy and practices.

Limitations, on the other hand, are intended to help the reader understand the context in which the findings should be interpreted and applied. They list the shortcomings of your research, which may be based on several reasons such as the unavailability of required resources, inefficient research design or method used, or lack of access to advanced instruments and apparatus. Disclosing the **limitations** of your research will help create an impression that your approach is realistic and you have a complete understanding of your research topic, as well as ensure that the scope of the applicability of the findings is clear.

Recommendations are suggestions drawn from your research for a specific course of action for subsequent research. Once you have listed the **limitations** of your research, you can

suggest ideas for future research based on the questions or gaps that your study could not address. You can also recommend other aspects of your research topic which would be interesting to work on and would constitute pioneering research questions.

H. Literature Review

Literature review is a comprehensive summary of previous research on a topic. The literature review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to a particular area of research. The review should enumerate, describe, summarize, objectively evaluate and clarify this previous research.

The purpose of a literature review is to demonstrate that your research question is meaningful. Additionally, you may review the literature of different disciplines to find deeper meaning and understanding of your topic. It is especially important to consider other disciplines when you do not find much on your topic in one discipline. You will need to search the cognate literature before claiming there is “little previous research” on your topic.

Well-developed literature reviews involve numerous steps and activities. The literature review is an iterative process because you will do at least two of them: a preliminary search to learn what has been published in your area and whether there is sufficient support in the literature for moving ahead with your subject. After this first exploration, you will conduct a deeper dive into the literature to learn everything you can about the topic and its related issues.

An effective literature review must:

- Methodologically analyse and synthesize quality literature on a topic
- Provide a firm foundation to a topic or research area
- Provide a firm foundation for the selection of a research methodology
- Demonstrate that the proposed research contributes something new to the overall body of knowledge of advances the research field’s knowledge base.

All literature reviews, whether they are qualitative, quantitative or both, will at some point:

1. Introduce the topic and define its key terms
2. Establish the importance of the topic
3. Provide an overview of the amount of available literature and its types (for example: theoretical, statistical, speculative)
4. Identify gaps in the literature
5. Point out consistent finding across studies
6. Arrive at a synthesis that organizes what is known about a topic
7. Discusses possible implications and directions for future research

Because a literature review is a summary and analysis of the relevant publications on a topic, we first have to understand what is meant by ‘the literature’. In this case, ‘the literature’ is a collection of all of the relevant written sources on a topic. It will include both theoretical and empirical works.

References and the Bibliography

Both refer to a list, usually at the end of the manuscript, of all the books, articles, documents, videos, interviews, and other sources that you may have used to gather the necessary information for your work. Each source cited in an article must be mentioned in the **reference** list and each **reference** must be represented by a citation in the main body of the article. In contrast, a **bibliography** is a collection of all materials used to gather information or to research a topic, and all items in a bibliography need not necessarily be cited in the main text.

Academic Presentation

A **presentation** is any situation which involves speaking to a group of people in order to make a point, educate or share information. ... **Academic presentations** take the same form, but the purpose can be very different. Specifically, **academic presentations** represent an oral examination.

Tips for Giving a Good Academic Presentation

Once you have become an expert at giving fabulous presentations, you can deviate from the formula. However, if you are new to presenting, you might want to follow it.

- Introduction/Overview/
- Theoretical Framework/Research Question
- Methodology/Case Selection
- Background/Literature Review
- Discussion of Data/Results
- Analysis
- Conclusion

The audience wants to hear about your research. Tell them.

One of the most common mistakes I see in people giving presentations is that they present only information I already know. This usually happens when they spend nearly all of the presentation going over the existing literature and giving background information on their particular case. You need only to discuss the literature with which you are directly engaging and contributing. Your background information should only include what is absolutely necessary. If you are giving a 15-minute presentation, by the 6th minute, you need to be discussing your data or case study. At conferences, people are there to learn about your new and exciting research, not to hear a summary of old work.

Practice. Practice. Practice.

You should always practice your presentation in full before you deliver it. You might feel silly delivering your presentation to your cat or your toddler, but you need to do it and do it again. You need to practice to ensure that your presentation fits within the time parameters. Practicing also makes it flow better. You can't practice too many times.

Keep To Your Time Limit

If you have ten minutes to present, prepare ten minutes of material. No more. Even if you only have seven minutes, you need to finish within the allotted time. If you write your presentation out, a general rule of thumb is two minutes per typed, double-spaced page. For a fifteen-minute talk, you should have no more than 7 double-spaced pages of material.

Don't Read Your Presentation

Yes, I know that in some fields reading is the norm. But, can you honestly say that you find yourself engaged when listening to someone read their conference presentation? If you absolutely must read, I suggest you read in such a way that no one in the audience can tell you are reading. I have seen people do this successfully, and you can do it too if you write in a conversational tone, practice several times, and read your paper with emotion, conviction, and variation in tone.

The basic principles of successful presentations

One of the most important principles for a speaker is to display a strong sense of **confidence and purpose**. The generally accepted view is that the more informed people are about the subject of their presentation, the more confident they are when they deliver their presentations.

Furthermore, confidence adds to the sense of purpose, i.e. the more evidence speakers can state, the more convincing they are. In other words, in order to defend a position the effective speaker should be as convincing and as confident as possible. To achieve this, the speaker should be aware that presentations are inherently interactive.

To sum up, confidence, purpose and preparation are the indispensable prerequisites of a successful presentation and should be effectively employed in speeches both in the native and foreign language. However, in order to attain this level of confidence, purpose and preparation, a student should first be assisted by the teacher to cope with communication apprehension.

Communication apprehension

It is a most natural human reaction, to be nervous, scared or distressed when speaking in front of a group of people even in one's native language. It may be translated as shyness, reticence or a lack of skills and knowledge associated with the topic of the speech. You can manage nervousness with the help of **practice and preparedness**.

Why is structuring a presentation so important?

If you've ever sat through a great presentation, you'll have left feeling either inspired or informed on a given topic. This isn't because the speaker was the most knowledgeable or motivating person in the world. Instead, it's because they know how to structure presentations - they have crafted their message in a logical and simple way that has allowed the audience can keep up with them and take away key messages.

What is the typical presentation structure?

This is the usual flow of a presentation, which covers all the vital sections and is a good starting point for yours. It allows your audience to easily follow along and sets out a solid structure you can add your content to.

1. Greet the audience and introduce yourself

Before you start delivering your talk, introduce yourself to the audience and clarify who you are and your relevant expertise. This does not need to be long or incredibly detailed, but will help build an immediate relationship between you and the audience. It gives you the chance to briefly clarify your expertise and why you are worth listening to. This will help establish your ethos so the audience will trust you more and think you're credible.

Read our tips on [How to Start a Presentation Effectively](#)

2. Introduction

In the introduction you need to explain the subject and purpose of your presentation whilst gaining the audience's interest and confidence. It's sometimes helpful to think of your introduction as funnel-shaped to help filter down your topic:

1. Introduce your general topic
2. Explain your topic area
3. State the issues/challenges in this area you will be exploring
4. State your presentation's purpose - this is the basis of your presentation so ensure that you provide a statement explaining how the topic will be treated, for example, "I will argue that..." or maybe you will "compare", "analyse", "evaluate", "describe" etc.
5. Provide a statement of what you're hoping the outcome of the presentation will be, for example, "I'm hoping this will be provide you with..."
6. Show a preview of the organisation of your presentation

In this section also explain:

- The length of the talk.
- Signal whether you want audience interaction - some presenters prefer the audience to ask questions throughout whereas others allocate a specific section for this.
- If it applies, inform the audience whether to take notes or whether you will be providing hand outs.

The way you structure your introduction can depend on the amount of time you have been given to present: a sales pitch may consist of a quick presentation so you may begin with your conclusion and then provide the evidence. Conversely, a speaker presenting their idea for change in the world would be better suited to start with the evidence and then conclude what this means for the audience.

Keep in mind that the main aim of the introduction is to grab the audience's attention and connect with them.

3. The main body of your talk

The main body of your talk needs to meet the promises you made in the introduction. Depending on the nature of your presentation, clearly segment the different topics you will be discussing, and then work your way through them one at a time - it's important for everything to be organised logically for the audience to fully understand. There are many different ways to organise your main points, such as, by priority, theme, chronologically etc.

- Main points should be addressed one by one with supporting evidence and examples.
- Before moving on to the next point you should provide a mini-summary.
- Links should be clearly stated between ideas and you must make it clear when you're moving onto the next point.
- Allow time for people to take relevant notes and stick to the topics you have prepared beforehand rather than straying too far off topic.

When planning your presentation write a list of main points you want to make and ask yourself "What I am telling the audience? What should they understand from this?" refining your answers this way will help you produce clear messages.

4. Conclusion

In presentations the conclusion is frequently underdeveloped and lacks purpose which is a shame as it's the best place to reinforce your messages. Typically, your presentation has a specific goal - that could be to convert a number of the audience members into customers, lead to a certain number of enquiries to make people knowledgeable on specific key points, or to motivate them towards a shared goal.

Regardless of what that goal is, be sure to summarise your main points and their implications. This clarifies the overall purpose of your talk and reinforces your reason for being there.

Follow these steps:

- Signal that it's nearly the end of your presentation, for example, "As we wrap up/as we wind down the talk..."
- Restate the topic and purpose of your presentation - "In this speech I wanted to compare..."
- Summarise the main points, including their implications and conclusions
- Indicate what is next/a call to action/a thought-provoking takeaway
- Move on to the last section

5. Thank the audience and invite questions

Conclude your talk by thanking the audience for their time and invite them to ask any questions they may have. As mentioned earlier, personal circumstances will affect the structure of your presentation.

Many presenters prefer to make the Q&A session the key part of their talk and try to speed through the main body of the presentation. This is totally fine, but it is still best to focus on delivering some sort of initial presentation to set the tone and topics for discussion in the Q&A.

How to write a research proposal

A research proposal describes **what** you will investigate, **why** it's important, and **how** you will do the research. The format of a research proposal varies between fields, but most proposals should contain at least these elements:

- Cover page
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Research design
- Reference list

There may be some variation in how the sections are named or divided, but the overall goals are always the same. This article takes you through a basic research proposal template and explains what you need to include in each part.

Table of contents

1. Title page
2. Introduction
3. Literature review
4. Research design and methods
5. Implications and contribution to knowledge
6. Reference list

7. Research schedule
8. Budget

Purpose of a research proposal

Academics often have to write research proposals to get funding for their projects. As a student, you might have to write a research proposal to get your thesis or dissertation plan approved. All research proposals are designed to persuade someone — such as a funding body, educational institution, or supervisor — that your project is worthwhile.

Research proposal aims

Relevance Convince the reader that your project is interesting, original and important

Context Show that you are familiar with the field, you understand the current state of research on the topic, and your ideas have a strong academic basis

Approach Make a case for your methodology, showing that you have carefully thought about the data, tools and procedures you will need to conduct the research

Feasibility Confirm that the project is possible within the practical constraints of the programme, institution or funding

How long is a research proposal?

The length of a research proposal varies dramatically. A bachelor's or master's thesis proposal can be just a few pages, while proposals for PhD dissertations and research funding are often very long and detailed.

Although you write it before you begin the research, the proposal's structure usually looks like a shorter version of a thesis or dissertation (but without the results and discussion sections).

Title page

Like your dissertation or thesis, the proposal will usually have a title page that includes:

- The proposed title of your project
- Your name
- Your supervisor's name
- The institution and department

Check with the department to see if there are any specific formatting requirements

Introduction

The first part of your proposal is the initial pitch for your project, so make sure it succinctly explains what you want to do and why. It should:

- Introduce the topic
- Give background and context
- Outline your problem statement and research question(s)

Some important questions to guide your introduction include:

- Who has an interest in the topic (e.g. scientists, practitioners, policymakers, particular members of society)?
- How much is already known about the problem?
- What is missing from current knowledge?
- What new insights will your research contribute?
- Why is this research worth doing?

Literature review

It's important to show that you're familiar with the most important research on your topic. A strong literature review convinces the reader that your project has a solid foundation in existing knowledge or theory. It also shows that you're not simply repeating what other people have already done or said.

This section aims to demonstrate exactly how your project will contribute to conversations in the field.

- Compare and contrast: what are the main theories, methods, debates and controversies?
- Be critical: what are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches?
- Show how your research fits in: how will you build on, challenge, or synthesize the work of others?

Research design and methods

Following the literature review, it's a good idea to restate your main objectives, bringing the focus back to your own project. The research design or methodology section should describe the overall approach and practical steps you will take to answer your research questions.

Methodology in a research proposal

Research type

- Will you do qualitative or quantitative research?
- Will you collect original data or work with primary or secondary sources?
- Is your research design descriptive, correlational, or experimental?

Sources

- Exactly what or who will you study (e.g. high school students in Addis Ababa or university students in one of regions in the country)
- How will you select subjects or sources (e.g. random sampling, case studies)?
- When and where will you collect the data?

Research methods

- What tools and procedures will you use (e.g. surveys, interviews,

observations, experiments) to collect and analyse data?

- Why are these the best methods to answer your research questions?

Practicalities

- How much time will you need to collect the data?
- How will you gain access to participants or sources?
- Do you foresee any potential obstacles, and how will you address them?

Implications and contribution to knowledge

To finish your proposal on a strong note, you can explore the potential implications of the research for theory or practice, and emphasize again what you aim to contribute to existing knowledge on the topic. For example, your results might have implications for:

- Improving processes in a specific location or field
- Informing policy objectives
- Strengthening a theory or model
- Challenging popular or scientific assumptions
- Creating a basis for further research

Reference list

Your research proposal must include proper citations for every source you have used, and full publication details should always be included in the reference list to create citations quickly and easily.

Research schedule

In some cases, you might have to include a detailed timeline of the research, explaining exactly what you will do at each stage and how long it will take.

Budget

If you are applying for research funding, you will probably also have to include a detailed budget that shows how much each part of the project will cost. Make sure to check what type

of costs the funding body will agree to cover, and only include relevant items in your budget. For each item, include:

- **Cost:** exactly how much money do you need?
- **Justification:** why is this cost necessary to complete the research?
- **Source:** how did you calculate the amount?

Dear students,

Having studied this material thoroughly, you are expected to find a topic and produce a research proposal in line with the aforementioned format you have just read. Do it as carefully as possible. Your work takes 30% of the course.

Good Luck!