

# Writing a Research Proposal

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A research proposal communicates what an investigator seeks to study, why the investigation is important, and how the study will be carried out. The proposal is written to garner support for the study. One may need academic support, financial support, or support from a healthcare institution in order to carry out a study. The research proposal should include the following:

- The Abstract is the first part of the document, although it should be written last. It should be brief, yet concise, since most readers rely on the abstract to give them a quick overview of the proposal. Most journal articles begin with an abstract, which gives a quick, thorough description of the article to follow
- The Statement of the Problem, sometimes called the Study Problem, declares the purpose of the study. The problem statement should demonstrate the importance of the study. A problem statement could be, "Many postoperative patients report postoperative nausea and vomiting following discharge home after ambulatory surgery." Within this section, the Significance of the Study should be noted. The proposed research is evaluated to assure that it contributes in some meaningful way to nursing knowledge and the improvement of nursing practice



- The Background of the Problem, often referred to as the Literature Search, requires a great deal of preparation time to achieve a good research investigation. The literature search must be thorough and complete. The investigator should follow a logical plan to locate the most recent studies, and should be selective and critical in choosing good quality studies. Reviewers want to know about existing research and how one has evaluated those works. The literature review information presented should clearly demonstrate the researcher's expert knowledge on the subject, and the discussion of previous research should build a case to convince the reader of the proposed investigation's value

- The Objective is a clear statement describing the specific purpose of the study. The research question may state the objective of the study. A well-written question is the foundation of the research proposal. The objective of a research study may be to find out "How do postoperative patients cope with nausea and vomiting at home following discharge from ambulatory surgery?"
- The Research Methods section includes the plan for sampling, the instrument to be used, design of the study, data collection, strategies for data analysis, and other details of the study. One should discuss any potential problems anticipated and offer a plan to address the potential problems



- Human Ethical Considerations include respect for persons, non-maleficence, and justice. Ethical considerations for a research study include:
  - scientific validity - is the research sound and valid?
  - recruitment - how were the participants recruited?
  - participation - what is required of participants?
  - harms and benefits to participants
  - whether subjects have given informed consent

- The Work Plan describes tasks involved in the study and how they will be addressed. The investigation time line and identification of the required human resources assures the reviewer that a solid plan exists to complete the activity
- The Personnel section lists the study's investigators and qualifications to do this work. A biographical data sheet may be required for each of the main study contributors
- The Facilities section assures the reader that needed resources are available to complete the proposed work. This list may include library resources, computer data collection and analysis programs, and records of needed documents
- Applications for research grants require very detailed budgets. A Budget shows that the investigator has prepared a good plan and is aware of the project's costs. Research study sponsors usually specify what should be included and how the budget should be presented

When writing a research proposal, please remember that the reader must be convinced the study is worthy of financial, academic or institutional support. Present a positive and confident attitude. In addition the writing should be concise and simple. When the proposal is accepted, the researcher will receive the necessary support to conduct the research, and the supporter can expect a well controlled project.

Grant sources may require that the researcher provide IRB approval prior to submitting. Be sure to review the guidelines from each grant-funding source carefully. Writing a proposal takes time and energy. Seeking the assistance of experienced researchers will often make the process smoother.

Letters of support should be included. If the researcher is using a statistician then the name of the statistician and their role in the research should be specified, along with a letter of support. If the researcher is with an organization, then the inclusion of a letter of support should be garnered from that organization.

Read through the research proposal prior to submitting. Assure that all signatures and requirements were included. Good Luck!

#### REFERENCES

Burns, N. & Grove, S.K. (2005). *The practice of nursing research: Conduct, critique, and utilization* (5th ed.). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier/Saunders.

Polit, D.F., Beck, C.T., & Hungler, B.P. (2005). *Essentials of nursing research: Methods, appraisal, and utilization* (6th ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.