



How to Plan Good Projects

What is Research?

Research is a *planned and organized* way to find out the *true* answers to *questions*. It also can help people solve problems.

Research is more than just a good guess. It is more than just one person's opinion or belief. To find out the *truth* or the *real answer*, you have to *plan* how to look for the answer. You have to be *organized* to get all the information you need to be sure you have found the right answer.



Research always starts with a *question*. You can ask questions where the answer is “yes” or “no.” Or you can ask questions about who, what, when, where, why, and how. There are different kinds of questions you can ask, like



- How many people are there who...?
- How long does it take to...?
- What do people think about *this*?
- How does *this* work?
- Does *this* work the way it is supposed to?
- Why do people do *that*?
- Can we predict what will happen if we know *some thing* about the situation or person?
- How can we make things better?
- What happens if you do *this* instead of *that*?
- Does *this* make a difference?

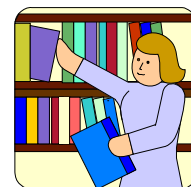
Researchers use four basic methods to get answers:

1. Look it up.
2. Ask people.
3. Watch and listen.
4. Do a test.

Here is how each method works.

Look it up.

Sometimes someone else has already done the research to answer the question you have. You just need to find it. This method is also a good way to find facts. The most common places to look are in a *library* or on the *Internet*.



Ask people.

There are different ways you can ask people questions to help you get answers. The main methods are

- *a one-to-one talk* - This is called an “interview.”
An interview can be done over the phone or face-to-face.
- *a group discussion* - This may be called a “focus group.”
- *fill out a form* - This is sometimes called a “survey.”
You can send the survey to people in the mail or you can have them fill out the form in a room with you.



People must be able to read in order to fill out a form. Phone interviews can be expensive if you have to call people long distance.

It is important to ask the right questions to find out what you need to know. You must word the questions fairly.

Watch and listen.

Researchers call this “observation.” Sometimes you can find answers by going into a situation and seeing what people do there. You then write down or record what you saw or heard. You can do this with paper and pencil, or a video or tape recorder.



Do a test.



This is a special kind of observation. With this method, you look at what people do in a situation that *you* set up or control.

Most of us did tests in school. A test puts people in a special situation that can show you what they know or what they have learned. A test can show you how people do things in that situation. Examples of tests can be a puzzle, a role play, or questions.

Kathleen Biersdorff and Christina Stebanuk got money from the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Community Research Program to write this paper.

