

A5 Steps in research projects


Rule #1: Consider each step of Table A.5, even for the smallest research projects. If you do not follow all of the steps, be aware of the risks you are taking.

Rule #2: Take sufficient time to formulate an interesting question or hypothesis, which will then *motivate* you throughout the whole research project (☺A9).

Rule #3: In addition, take the time to develop a solid feasibility study, and think of the design of the envisaged research project. Assessing the feasibility of research is most important when you work in groups. After going through this phase, try to adhere to your research question and timing, as much as possible (☺A6).

Rule #4: of 'overstretch' during the research process. If you change your research question during the course of the research project, as a rule do not add topics but make the research precise and limitative. Only alter the question at the appropriate time (step four or nine). Be aware that the function of many of the instrumental skills changes during the course of a project.

Table A.5 Research Steps

1 Needs		A	<input type="checkbox"/> Specify your research needs/problems, or those of your client
2 Aim	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Specify your research aims: a. Personal (⊕A3); b. Topical. Formulate a problem definition and an initial research question. What outcome and impact do you want the research to have?
3 Time	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Specify the time available for the research project (⊕B8): a. In weeks/days/hours; b. What other obligations do you have during the project? Consider layout and language style (who is your audience?). Designate an editor. (⊕G12)
4 Feasibility	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Make a feasibility study of the topic and planned methodology (⊕A6, A8). Is it 'researchable' considering available resources and your own capacity/time? Revise the initial question (⊕A9). Decide upon method(s). Stick with them.
5 Question	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a question hierarchy: a logical sequence of research (sub)questions, which also contribute to the contents of your research report. Specify the concrete end product of your research (⊕A2).
6 Linkages	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Link each (sub)question to a preferred method. Write a rough introduction.
7 Labour Division	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> If you work in a group: what would be a useful division of labour for the remaining steps? Create sufficient overlap in your labour division.
8 Budgets	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Specify the 'budgets' available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Time budget. Set clear deadlines. Specify time modules (⊕B8, B10, B11); <input type="checkbox"/> Page budget. Clarify the importance of each part in your end product; <input type="checkbox"/> Social budget. What networks (of informants) are you in (⊕G2)? <input type="checkbox"/> Financial budget. In case of a commercial product; if this budget is not approved, you will probably have to stop the project; <input type="checkbox"/> Energy budget. Make clear what your ambition is and how much energy you (and your group members) would like to put in the project.
9 Theory	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Finish the conceptual/theoretical part as soon as possible. The main content of your feasibility study has dealt with this already. Elaborate on paper, do not keep it in your head! This elaboration will probably trigger further specifications of your research question and the concepts used when collecting data.
10 Data	↓	B	<input type="checkbox"/> Only now do you come to the part where you collect primary data, do interviews and so forth. Specify a further labour division if you are part of a group.
11 Analysis	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Write down the results of your empirical search. Analyse and interpret them.
12 Conclusion	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Always repeat your research question(s), draw conclusions (⊕E5).
13 Summary	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Write an 'executive summary', this should be approximately one page long.
14 Preface	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Write your preface and rewrite your introduction. Reveal all of the analytical and methodological choices that you have made! (⊕A1)
15 Layout	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Finalise the layout of your report (⊕E16).
16 Letter	↓		<input type="checkbox"/> Send a well written letter to the person/organisation who commissioned the research project (also teachers), outlining the status of the report [ www.skillsheets.com].