

# Preparing for Research

## Planning Research Papers 3

When considering a possible research area, it is essential to evaluate the problem to analyze the possible difficulties in it.

### **A. Evaluate the Problem—Ask Yourself These Questions:**

#### *Personal Considerations*

1. Does the problem match my goals and the expectations of others, like my instructor, the members of my master's committee, or the editors of the journal I plan ?
2. Am I really interested in this problem but free from strong biases?
3. Do I have or can I acquire the necessary skills, abilities, and background knowledge to study this problem?
4. Are the tools, equipment, laboratories, and subjects readily available that I will need to conduct the investigation?
5. Do I have the time and money to complete it?
6. Can I obtain enough relevant data?
7. Does the problem meet the scope, significance, and topical requirements of the institution or periodical to which I will submit my report?
8. Can I get sufficient support, guidance, and cooperation from my institution to conduct the study?

#### *Social Considerations*

1. Will the solution of this problem advance knowledge in the field appreciably?
2. Will the findings have some practical value to educators, parents, or other workers in the field?
3. Will the application of the findings have some significance in terms of range of individuals, years of applicability, and areas of coverage?
4. Will the investigation duplicate work that has been or is already being done adequately by someone else?
5. If this topic has been dealt with, does it need to be extended beyond its present limits?
6. Is the topic sufficiently delimited (narrowed) to permit thorough treatment yet significant enough to justify investigating it?
7. Will the study lead to the development of other investigations or is this a deadend topic?

Strong feelings about a topic make it very difficult to maintain objectivity.

(Over)

**B. Analyze the Problem:**

1. Select a problem that truly interests you and begs for a solution.
  2. Accumulate facts that might be related to the problem.
  3. Determine which facts are relevant.
  4. Among the facts, explain any relationships that might reveal the key to the difficulty.
  5. Propose some alternative explanations (hypotheses) for the cause of the difficulty.
  6. Determine which explanations are relevant to the problem.
  7. Among the explanations, explain any relationships that may give an insight into the solution.
  8. Make the relationships between facts and explanations explicit.
  9. Question assumptions underlying the analysis of the problem.
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**Common Errors Graduate Students Make in Formulating a Research Study**

1. Putting off selecting a problem until all or most of the course work is finished.
2. Uncritically accepting the first research idea you think of or that someone suggests.
3. Selecting a problem that is too large or too vague to investigate meaningfully.
4. Formulating fuzzy or untestable hypotheses.
5. Failing to consider methods or analysis procedures in developing a tentative research plan.