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Research objectives

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Research

- Research is an integral part of **many occupations**, making it a valuable career **skill**.
- Research objectives, which are specific **outcomes** that you aim to achieve through research, can drive your **projects** and help you **achieve** your overall goals.
- If your job involves conducting research, knowing how to **develop research objectives** is a crucial skill.



What are research objectives?

- Research objectives are the **outcomes** that you aim to achieve by conducting research.
- Many research projects contain **more than one research objective**.
- Creating **strong** research objectives can help your organization achieve its overall goals.
- The purpose of research objectives is to **drive** the research project, including data collection, analysis and conclusions.
- Research objectives also help you **narrow** in on the **focus** of your research and key **variables**, guiding you through the research process.



Location of research objectives

- Typically, research objectives appear early in a research **proposal**, often between the introduction and the research question.
- Sometimes, depending on the length of the **paper or proposal**, you can **place** the research objectives in the **introduction**.
- Usually, researchers also list their objectives in the **abstract** of their proposal.





How to write research objectives

- Identifying your research objectives is **crucial** to conducting a successful research project.
- Here are three simple steps that you can follow to identify and write your research objectives:
 - Pinpoint the **major focus** of your research.
 - **Break down** your research focus into research objectives.
 - Write your research objectives in the **SMART** format.



Pinpoint the major focus of your research

- The **first step** to writing your research objectives is to pinpoint the **major focus** of your research project.
- In this step, make sure to clearly describe what you **aim to achieve** through your research.
- You can identify a **research focus** by reading through your industry's **literature** and **finding gaps** in existing research.
- Once you find a **gap** that you can fill through your research project, you can start **narrowing down a focus** for your research project and setting an **overall goal** that you want to achieve through your research.



Break down your research focus into research objectives

- Once you know the primary goal of your research project, you can **break it down** into smaller steps and **separate objectives**.
- You can choose **one general objective** and a **few other specific**, narrow objectives.
- In the **general objective**, state in a **broad sense** what you aim to achieve through your research.
- Then, use the **specific objectives** to describe **how** you can achieve your general goal.
- For example, your general objective could be, "**Determine how work environment affects performance.**"
- In this case, your **specific objectives** might be, "**Determine whether sunlight improves performance,**" and "**Measure how performance changes when work environment changes.**"



Write your research objectives in the SMART format

- Another key step to writing strong research objectives is to use the **SMART** format.
- Using this format can make your objectives **clearer and easier** to understand, which can make you more likely to achieve them.
- Make sure your objectives meet these criteria:
 - **S**pecific
 - **M**easurable
 - **A**chievable
 - **R**elevant
 - **T**ime-based



Specific

- Be specific about your **desired outcomes**.
- Your objectives should be **clearly written** and leave **no room for confusion**.
- This can help you keep them **narrow and focused**.



Measurable

- Making your objectives **measurable** is essential to achieving them.
- You can create **metrics** to measure your **progress** toward achieving your objectives.



Achievable

- Be sure to create objectives that you can **realistically achieve** to help you **avoid** getting overwhelmed by **unrealistic expectations**.
- Make sure you have the **resources** and **budget** to accomplish your objectives.



Relevant

- Make your objectives **relevant** to your research and your **overall goals**.
- This can help you stay **motivated** and on **track** throughout your research project.



Time-based

- You can establish **deadlines** to help you keep your research process on **track**.
- You can set a **major deadline** for your entire project as well as **smaller deadlines** for **each objective**.





Tips for writing your research objectives

- Be concise
- Keep your number of objectives limited
- Use action verbs
- Be realistic
- Ask for feedback
- Proofread and review your objectives



Be concise

- One tip for writing strong research objectives is to write your objectives as **concisely** as you can.
- Try to **remove unnecessary words** and filler to make your objectives as easy to understand as possible.
- If possible, try to keep each individual objective to only **one sentence**.
- This can make it easier to use your objectives to guide your research process.



Keep your number of objectives limited

- It's also important to write only a **few** specific research objectives.
- Try to **limit your number** of objectives to **five or less** to help you avoid getting overwhelmed by trying to accomplish a long list of objectives.
- You can also choose **one general objective and a few other specific**, pointed objectives.



Use action verbs

- Using **action verbs** is another way you can strengthen your research objectives.
- Using action verbs can help you measure whether you've **accomplished** your research objective, and it can also make your objectives feel more **actionable and engaging**.
- Some action verbs you could consider using are:
 - Assess
 - Determine
 - Calculate
 - Compare
 - Explain
 - Describe



Be realistic

- Another tip for writing research objectives is to keep them **realistic**.
- Make sure you can achieve them with the **time** and **resources** you already have.
- **Unrealistic objectives** can make you feel **overwhelmed** and **discouraged**, so it's important to create objectives that you can realistically achieve.



Ask for feedback

- You can also improve your research objectives by **asking a mentor or colleague to review** your research objective drafts.
- This can help you **spot any errors** you might have missed and make your objectives **more understandable** to other people.



Proofread and review your objectives

- It's also important to **proofread and review** your objectives to make sure they're free of typos and other errors.
- Check your **spelling and grammar** to ensure that your objectives appear professional and perfectly accurate.





How To Write a SMART Goal (And How They Work)

- **Specific:** What do you want to be accomplished and what will you do to achieve this goal? This involves being specific with every part of your SMART goal.
- **Measurable:** What data will be used for goal measuring? Making your goal measurable will help you track your progress.
- **Achievable:** Is achieving this goal possible? Making your goal attainable ensures its success.
- **Relevant:** Why is this goal important? Making sure your goal is relevant ensures it relates to your other broad or rather, ultimate goals.
- **Time-bound:** When does the goal need to be completed? This takes into account the time period that this goal needs to be achieved.



Consider the type of goal

- Before you start writing your goal, it's important to consider the **type of goal** you're wanting to attain.
- Consider whether you want to **make** something, **improve** something, **save** something, **reduce** something or anything else of a similar nature.
- This will help **narrow down** what it is exactly that you're hoping to achieve.



Make it specific

- Following the guidelines of a SMART goal, start by making your goal **specific**.
- Ask yourself **who** will be involved in order to achieve the goal, what you want to **accomplish**, what **requirements** will need to be met before you start toward your goal, **why** you want to achieve this goal and more.
- If it's applicable, consider a **relevant location** associated with your goal.
- Though the time-frame will be explained in a later step, it's a good idea to start thinking of a goal **completion date**, as well.



Make it measurable

- Next, consider **how** you'll determine whether or not the goal was met.
- This step will help you **measure** your progress and ultimately ascertain how you will define success in relation to this goal.
- Some **forms** of measurement you could potentially use include customer satisfaction surveys or quality reports.



Make it achievable

- Your SMART goal should also be **achievable**.
- This means it'll need to be **attainable**.
- For some of your goals to be attainable, you might need to learn **new skills** or consider its **overall timeline**.
- Consider the **tools or skills** you'll need for your goal, whether or not you have them and **what it'll take to attain them**.



Make it relevant

- When you write a SMART goal, it's **important** that it's relevant to a larger, **overarching goal**.
- This ensures it wasn't **wasted time**.
- For example, if you're trying to increase marketing efforts, you should make sure this is in **alignment** with others in your department and the company's goals overall.



Make it time-bound

- Lastly, make sure your goal is **time-bound**.
- In other words, you should be mindful of the **time** you'll need to achieve it by.
- Consider a **date** and determine whether or not you think the goal will be able to be accomplished by then.
- It can be helpful to **pinpoint** certain tasks that you'll want to achieve at certain points within your **timeline**.



Advantages

- SMART goals present various advantages.
- For starters, they're **not vague**.
- Whereas most goals people make aren't **very descriptive**, SMART goals are specific, which ultimately helps increase their odds of being achieved.
- Also, SMART goals incorporate **your plans**.
- This helps you achieve your goal since you'll already **know the next steps** to take.
- Since SMART goals require some form of **measurement**, they also provide you with the opportunity to **track your progress**.
- If you miss a small deadline within your overall goal deadline, you'll not only know, but you'll also have time **to get back on track**.




Disadvantages

- Though SMART goals are very advantageous, they also pose some disadvantages.
- For example, because your goal will be well-planned out, it could lead you to become **obsessed** with completing your goal by a certain deadline.
- Also, it could make you crave **more achievements** in the future and could potentially set you up for a continuous cycle of wanting to achieve goal after goal.
- For some, SMART goal making could be overly **ambitious**.

Example 1

- Let's say you want to find a **new job** in the near future.
- You've determined that your ultimate SMART goal is **to gain new employment** at a **software company** within the **next three months** to advance in your career.



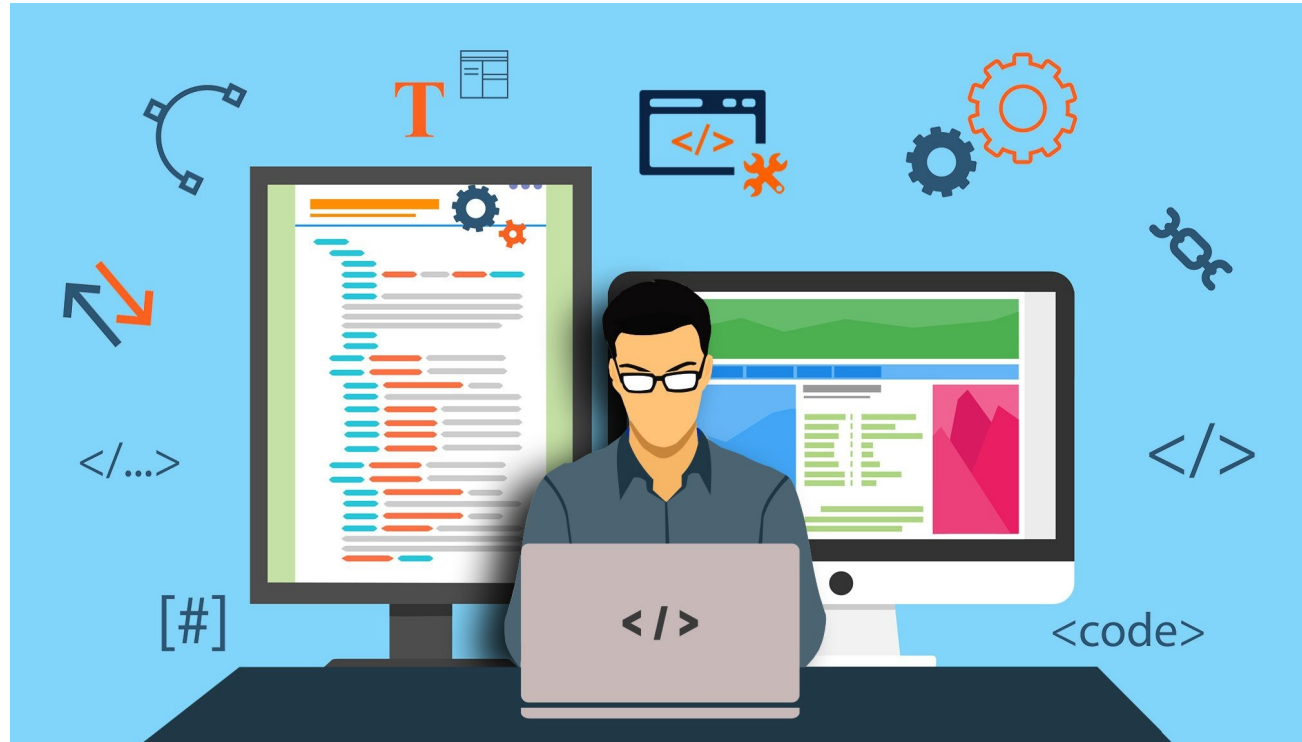


Example 1 - SMART

- **Specific:** You love your current developer job but it lacks the opportunity for growth. You want to **find a new job in the city within the next three months** because you believe it will be a wise career choice.
- **Measurable:** In order to ensure you're following through with your goal, you will complete **five job applications per week** leading up to your goal deadline.
- **Achievable:** In order to achieve this goal, you'll need a new online **portfolio**. This will require you to **upload** new portfolio materials and give your website a **revamp**. You'll do this as soon as possible and set a goal **timeline** a few months in advance to ensure it's attainable.
- **Relevant:** Since you value professional **growth and want to become a senior developer** by 2024, this SMART goal is highly relevant to your career.
- **Time-bound:** To achieve this goal, you'll need to meet your set **deadline of three months**.

Example 2

- Let's say you want to hire 10 new developers to your work team by the end of the year to to satisfactorily serve your clients.





Example 2 - SMART

- **Specific:** You want to hire 10 new developers to your software development company by the end of the year in order to supplement new client requirements.
- **Measurable:** You plan on measuring your progress by hiring at least 1-2 new employees each month to achieve this goal by the deadline.
- **Achievable:** You ensure this goal is achievable by lowering your other company-costs to afford new employee salaries. Also, you set a completion date of 12 months in advance to ensure you meet this goal at a steady pace.
- **Relevant:** This goal is relevant because many clients have expressed concern that they have more requirements than they're able to assign to the current number of developers. Also, you and other executive leaders are hoping to expand your audience by bringing in developers with experience in apps not yet worked on in your company.
- **Time-bound:** You decide that you're going to give yourself until the end of the year to complete this goal.



Sources

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Research Objectives: Definition and How To Write Them.
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