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Learn more about methodology

The first few steps of your research plan—the introduction, research questions and KPIs—focus on the aim of the research, the questions you'll focus on trying to answer, and how you'll measure the information you receive. After planning this part of your research study, it's time to think about *how* you'll collect the information. In other words, determining what the methodology will be.

Methodology involves the steps you'll take to conduct research, collect data, and analyze data. When thinking about the methodology, it's important to consider 1) the type of research method involved, 2) the steps involved in the research method, and 3) the type of data that will be generated from the research method.

Comparing research methods

You learned in the first week of Course 2 about various primary and secondary research methods: **Primary research** is research *you* conduct yourself, while **secondary research** is research that uses information *someone else* has put together. Some examples of primary research are interviews—which you conducted in Course 2—surveys, [competitive audits](#) [↗], and usability studies. Another point to consider is whether the research method is *quantitative or qualitative*. **Qualitative research** focuses observations on why and how things happen, and **quantitative research** focuses on data that can be gathered by counting or measuring.

For example, most of your primary, qualitative research will most likely be conducted during the **empathize** phase of the project, when your goal is to find out as much as possible about the challenges, needs and characteristics of potential users before creating designs.

Each method is unique and yields very different kinds of results. For more information, check out the [Learn more about research methods](#) [↗] reading from Course 2.

Conducting research with a usability study

For the purposes of Course 4, your research plan will include a **usability study** as the research method. In the last course, you learned how to create low-fidelity prototypes. This research method is ideal at this stage of a project because it involves testing out your design with real, potential users.

Usability studies are *primary, qualitative* research methods because they allow UX designers to make direct and indirect observations based on the participants' behavior and words. You'll give each participant a few guided tasks and take notes on how successfully the tasks are completed (direct observation), and you'll also record the study in order to play it back later (indirect observation) to discover new insights from the study.

At this stage, you can start thinking about filling in the [research plan template](#) [↗], but later you'll have a chance to write a detailed description of your methodology and continue to build your research plan. To get more ideas about the info to include in a research plan, check out a couple [Example UX research plans](#) [↗].

