The steps in formulating a problem .

**1. Specify the Research Objectives**

A clear statement of objectives will help you develop *effective research.* It will help the decision makers evaluate your project. It’s critical that you have manageable objectives. (Two or three clear goals will help to keep your research project focused and relevant.)

**2. Review the Environment or Context of the Research Problem**

As a marketing researcher, you must work closely with your team. This will help you determine whether the findings of your project will produce enough information to be worth the cost. In order to do this, you have to identify the environmental variables that will affect the research project.

**3. Explore the Nature of the Problem**

Research problems range from simple to complex, depending on the number of variables and the nature of their relationship. If you understand the nature of the *problem as a researcher*, you will be able to better develop a solution for the problem. To help you understand all dimensions, you might want to consider focus groups of consumers, sales people, managers, or professionals to provide what is sometimes much needed insight.

**4. Define the Variable Relationships**

Marketing plans often focus on creating a sequence of behaviors that occur over time, as in the adoption of a new package design, or the introduction of a new product. Such programs create a commitment to follow some behavioral pattern in the future.

Studying such a process involves:

Determining which variables affect the solution to the problem.

Determining the degree to which each variable can be controlled.

Determining the functional relationships between the variables and which variables are critical to the solution of the problem.

During the problem formulation stage, you will want to generate and consider as many courses of action and variable relationships as possible.

**5. The Consequences of Alternative Courses of Action**

There are always consequences to any course of action. Anticipating and communicating the possible outcomes of various courses of action is a primary responsibility in the research process.