LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Anybody, who is reading the research report, must necessarily be conveyed enough about the study so that he can place it in its general scientific context, judge the adequacy of its methods and thus form an opinion of how seriously the findings are to be taken. For this purpose there is the need of proper layout of the report means as to what the research report should contain. A comprehensive layout of the research report should comprise (a) preliminary pages; (b) main text; and(c) the end matter. Let us deal with them separately

(a) Preliminary Pages

In its preliminary pages the report should carry a title and date, followed by acknowledgements in the form of 'preface' or 'foreword'. Then there should be a table of contents followed by List of tables and illustrations so that the decision maker or anybody interested in reading the report can easily locate the required information in the report.

(b) Main Text

The main text provides the complete outline of the research report along with all details. Title of the research study is repeated at the top of the first page of the main text and then follows the other details on pages numbered consecutively, beginning with the second page. Each main section of the report should begin on a new page. The main text of the report should have the following sections: (i) Introduction; (ii) Statement of findings and recommendations; (iii) The results; (iv) The implications drawn from the results; and (v) The summary.

(i) Introduction

The purpose of introduction is to introduce the research project to the readers It should contain a clear statement of the objectives of research i.e., enough background should be given to make clear to the reader why the problem was considered worth investigating. A brief summary of other relevant research may also be stated so that the present study can be seen in that context. The hypotheses of study, if any, and the definitions of the major concepts employed in the study should be explicitly stated in the introduction of the report.

The methodology adopted in conducting the study must be fully explained. The scientific reader would like to know in detail about such thing: How was the study carried out? What was its basic design? If the study was an experimental one, then what were the experimental manipulations? If the data were collected by means of questionnaires or interviews, then exactly what questions were asked (The questionnaire or interview schedule is usually given in an appendix).If measurements were based on observation, then what instructions were

given to the observers? Regarding the sample used in the study the reader should be told: Who were the subjects? How many were there? How were they selected? All these questions are crucial for estimating the probable limits of generalizability of the findings.

The statistical analysis adopted must also be clearly stated. In addition to all this, the scope of the study should be stated and the boundary lines be demarcated. The various limitations, under which the research project was completed, must also be narrated.

(ii) Statement of findings and recommendations

After introduction, the research report must contain a statement of findings and recommendations in non-technical language so that it can be easily understood by all concerned. If the findings happen to be extensive, at this point they should be put in the summarized form.

(iii)Results

A detailed presentation of the findings of the study, with supporting data in the form of tables and charts together with a validation of results, is the next step in writing the main text of the report. This generally comprises the main body of the report, extending over several chapters. The result section of the report should contain statistical summaries and reductions of the data rather than the raw data. All the results should be presented in logical sequence and splitted into readily identifiable sections. All relevant results must find a place in the report. But how one is to decide about what is relevant is the basic question. Quite often guidance comes primarily from the research problem and from the hypotheses if any, with which the study was concerned. But ultimately the researcher must rely on his own judgement in deciding the outline of his report.

(***iv)Implications of the results*** Toward the end of the main text, the researcher should again put down the results of his research clearly and precisely. He should, state the implications that flow from the results of the study, for the general reader is interested in the implications for understanding the human behaviour. Such implications may have three aspects as stated below:

(a) A statement of the inferences drawn from the present study which may be expected to apply in similar circumstances.

(b) The conditions of the present study which may limit the extent of legitimate generalizations of the inferences drawn from the study.

(c) The relevant questions that still remain unanswered or new questions raised by the study along with suggestions for the kind of research that would provide answers for them.

It is considered a good practice to finish the report with a short conclusion which summarises and recapitulates the main points of the study. The conclusion drawn from the study should be clearly related to the hypotheses that were stated in the introductory section. At the same time, a forecast of the probable future of the subject and an indication of the kind of research which needs to be done in that particular field is useful and desirable.

(*v*) *Summary:* It has become customary to conclude the research report with a very brief summary, resting in brief the research problem, the methodology, the major findings and the major conclusions drawn from the research results.

(c) End Matter

At the end of the report, appendices should be enlisted in respect of all technical data such as questionnaires, sample information, mathematical derivations and the like ones. Bibliography of sources consulted should also be given. Index (an alphabetical listing of names, places and topics along with the numbers of the pages in a book or report on which they are mentioned or discussed) should invariably be given at the end of the report. The value of index lies in the fact that it works as a guide to the reader for the contents in the report.

Research Proposal

In a research proposal, the goal is to present the author's plan for the research they intend to conduct. In some cases, part of this goal is to secure funding for said research. In others, it's to have the research approved by the author's supervisor or department so they can move forward with it. In some cases, a research proposal is a required part of a graduate school application. In every one of these circumstances, research proposals follow the same structure.

In a research proposal, the author demonstrates how and why their research is relevant to their field. They demonstrate that the work is necessary for the following:

- Filling a gap in the existing body of research on their subject
- Underscoring existing research on their subject, and/or
- Adding new, original knowledge to the academic community's existing understanding of their subject

A research proposal also demonstrates that the author is capable of conducting this research and contributing to the current state of their field in a meaningful way. To do this, your research proposal needs to discuss your academic background and credentials as well as demonstrate that your proposed ideas have academic merit.

But demonstrating your research's validity and your personal capability to carry it out isn't enough to get your research proposal approved. **Your research proposal also has to cover these things**:

a. The research methodology you plan to use
b. The tools and procedures you will use to collect, analyze, and interpret the data you collect
c. An explanation of how your research fits the budget and other constraints that come with conducting it through your institution, department, or academic program

If you've already read our post on literature reviews, you may be thinking that a research proposal sounds pretty similar. They're more than just similar, though—a literature review is part of a research proposal. It's the section that covers which sources you're using, how you're using them, and why they're relevant. Think of a literature review as a mini-research proposal that fits into your larger, main proposal.

Length of Proposal

Generally, research proposals for bachelor's and master's theses are a few pages long. Research proposals for Ph.D. dissertations and funding requests, are often longer and far more detailed. A research proposal's goal is to clearly outline exactly what your research will entail and accomplish, so including the proposal's word count or page count isn't nearly as important as it is to ensure that all the necessary elements and content are present.

Research proposal structure

A research proposal follows a fairly straightforward structure. In order to achieve the goals described in the previous section, nearly all research proposals include the following sections:

Introduction

Your introduction achieves a few goals:

- Introduces your topic
- States your problem statement and the questions your research aims to answer
- Provides context for your research

In a research proposal, an introduction can be a few paragraphs long. It should be concise, but don't feel like you need to cram all of your information into one paragraph.

In some cases, you need to include an abstract and/or a table of contents in your research proposal. These are included just before the introduction.

Background significance

This is where you explain why your research is necessary and how it relates to established research in your field. Your work might complement existing research, strengthen it, or even challenge it—no matter how your work will "play with" other researchers' work, you need to express it in detail in your research proposal.

This is also the section where you clearly define the existing problems your research will address. By doing this, you're explaining why your work is necessary.

In your background section, you'll also outline how you'll conduct your research. If necessary, note which related questions and issues you won't be covering in your research.

Literature review

In your literature review, you introduce all the sources you plan to use in your research. This includes landmark studies and their data, books, and scholarly articles. A literature review isn't merely a list of sources (that's what your bibliography is for); a literature review delves into the collection of sources you chose and explains how you're using them in your research.

Research design, methods, and schedule

In this section, make sure you cover these aspects:

- The type of research you will do. Are you conducting qualitative or quantitative research? Are you collecting original data or working with data collected by other researchers?
- Whether you're doing experimental, correlational, or descriptive research
- The data you're working with. For example, if you're conducting research in the social sciences, you'll need to describe the population you're studying. You'll also need to cover how you'll select your subjects and how you'll collect data from them.

The tools you'll use to collect data.

- Sampling frame
- Sampling method
- Use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics
- Will you be running experiments?
- Conducting surveys?
- Observing phenomena?

Note all data collection methods here along with why they're effective methods for your specific research.

Beyond a comprehensive look at your research itself, you'll also need to include:

- Your research timeline
- Your research budget
- Any potential obstacles you foresee and your plan for handling them

Suppositions and implications

Although you can't know your research's results until you've actually done the work, you should be going into the project with a clear idea of how your work will contribute to your field. This section is perhaps the most critical to your research proposal's argument because it expresses exactly why your research is necessary.

In this section, make sure you cover the following:

- Any ways your work can challenge existing theories and assumptions in your field
- Your work will create the foundation for future research
- The practical value of your findings will provide to practitioners, educators, and other academics in your field
- The problems your work can potentially help to fix
- Policies that could be impacted by your findings
- How your findings can be implemented in academia or other settings and how this will improve or otherwise transform these settings

In other words, this section isn't about stating the specific results you expect. Rather, it's where you state how your findings will be valuable.

Conclusion

This is where you wrap it all up. Your conclusion section, just like your conclusion paragraph for an essay, briefly summarizes your research proposal and reinforces your research's stated purpose.

Bibliography

Yes, you need to write a bibliography in addition to your literature review. Unlike your literature review, where you explained the relevance of the sources you chose and in some cases, challenged them, your bibliography simply lists your sources and their authors.

The way you write a citation depends on the style guide you're using. The three most common style guides for academics are MLA, APA, and Chicago, and each has its own particular rules and requirements. Keep in mind that each formatting style has specific guidelines for citing just about any kind of source, including photos, websites, speeches, and YouTube videos.

Sometimes, a full bibliography is not needed. When this is the case, you can include a references list, which is simply a scaled-down list of all the sources you cited in your work. If you're not sure which to write, ask your supervisor.

How to write a research proposal

Research proposals, like all other kinds of academic writing, are written in a formal, objective tone. Keep in mind that being concise is a key component of academic writing; formal does not mean flowery.

Adhere to the structure outlined above. Your reader knows how a research proposal is supposed to read and expects it to fit this template. It's crucial that you present your research proposal in a clear, logical way. Every question the reader has while reading your proposal should be answered by the final section.

Common mistakes to avoid when writing a research proposal

When you're writing a research proposal, avoid these common pitfalls:

Being too wordy

As we said earlier, formal does not mean flowery. In fact, you should aim to keep your writing as brief and to-the-point as possible. The more economically you can express your purpose and goal, the better.

Failing to cite relevant sources

When you're conducting research, you're adding to the existing body of knowledge on the subject you're covering. Your research proposal should reference one or more of the landmark research pieces in your field and connect your work to these works in some way. This doesn't just communicate your work's relevance—it also demonstrates your familiarity with the field.

Focusing too much on minor issues

Including too many questions and issues in your research proposal can detract from your central purpose, weakening the proposal. Save the minor issues for your research paper itself and cover only the major, key issues you aim to tackle in your proposal.

Failing to make a strong argument for your research

This is perhaps the easiest way to undermine your proposal because it's far more subjective than the others. A research proposal is, in essence, a piece of persuasive writing. That means that

although you're presenting your proposal in an objective, academic way, the goal is to get the reader to say "yes" to your work.

This is true in every case, whether your reader is your supervisor, your department head, a graduate school admissions board, a private or government-backed funding provider, or the editor at a journal in which you'd like to publish your work.

Polish your writing into a stellar proposal

When you're asking for approval to conduct research—especially when there's funding involved—you need to be nothing less than 100 percent confident in your proposal. If your research proposal has spelling or grammatical mistakes, an inconsistent or inappropriate tone, or even just awkward phrasing, those will undermine your credibility.