

[Skip to main content](#)



University of Newcastle Library guides

1. [University of Newcastle Library](#)
2. [LibGuides](#)
3. [Research Methods](#)
4. What are research methods?

Enter Search Words...

Research Methods: What are research methods?

A guide to research methods, and search strategies for finding research.

- [What are research methods?](#)
- [Finding qualitative research](#)Toggle Dropdown
- [Finding quantitative research](#)Toggle Dropdown



RESEARCH

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What are research methods

Research methods are the strategies, processes or techniques utilized in the collection of data or evidence for analysis in order to uncover new information or create better understanding of a topic.

There are different types of research methods which use different tools for data collection.

Types of research

- [Qualitative Research](#)
- [Quantitative Research](#)
- [Mixed Methods Research](#)

Qualitative Research gathers data about lived experiences, emotions or behaviours, and the meanings individuals attach to them. It assists in enabling researchers to gain a better understanding of complex concepts, social interactions or cultural phenomena. This type of research is useful in the exploration of how or why things have occurred, interpreting events and describing actions.

Data collection tools

Techniques or tools used for gathering research data include:

Qualitative Techniques or Tools	Quantitative Techniques or Tools
Interviews: these can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured in-depth sessions with the researcher and a participant.	Surveys or questionnaires: which ask the same questions to large numbers of participants or use Likert scales which measure opinions as numerical data.
Focus groups: with several participants discussing a particular topic or a set of questions. Researchers can be facilitators or observers.	Observation: which can either involve counting the number of times a specific phenomenon occurs, or the coding of observational data in order to translate it into numbers.
Observations: On-site, in-context or role-play options.	Document screening: sourcing numerical data from financial reports or counting word occurrences.
Document analysis: Interrogation of correspondence (letters, diaries, emails etc) or reports.	Experiments: testing hypotheses in laboratories, testing cause and effect relationships, through field

Qualitative Techniques or Tools	Quantitative Techniques or Tools
	experiments, or via quasi- or natural experiments.
Oral history or life stories: Remembrances or memories of experiences told to the researcher.	

SAGE research methods

- [SAGE research methods online](#)

Research methods tool to help researchers gather full-text resources, design research projects, understand a particular method and write up their research.

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- [MyUoN](#)
- [Online tools](#)

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- [Jobs at UoN](#)
- [Giving to UoN](#)
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- [Indigenous engagement](#)

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