

**Group Project Study Proposal Guide -
Due Thurs Feb 1st
15 Points**

1. Your project proposal must be critiqued and approved by the instructor before proceeding.

All this says is that you can't move onto the Protocol until, the Proposal is approved. This prevents groups from just skipping this aspect of the total project. If you don't do the first step, then subsequent steps will not be accepted for grading

2. Write a coherent thesis statement (i.e. what specifically your research question is)

The thesis statement does not necessarily need to be a single sentence. It should include a clear description of the independent and dependent variables. Remember that the Independent Variable (IV) brings about a change in the Dependent Variable (DV). That is the IV causes a change in the DV. The independent variable can be a preexisting psychological/personal characteristic of the participants (e.g., sex, gender roles, aggression attitudes, type of TV show, attitudes toward puppies, etc.) or it can be a variable that you as the researcher manipulate (e.g., treatment vs. no-treatment, attractive model vs. unattractive model, violent video game vs. non-violent, watching 47 hrs of Barney the Dinosaur videos vs. watching 47 hrs of Painting with Bob Ross). Also, you need to be clear about what relationship you expect to see between the IV and DV. Often, students and researchers hypothesize that there will be a relationship between two variables without thinking about what kind of relationship is expected.

For example, the following is a poor example of a thesis statement "The proposed study will investigate the association between watching certain types of TV programs and having the desire to wear an eggplant on your head. It is expected that participants who watch Barney the Dinosaur will have different preferences for wearing eggplants on their heads than participants who watch 'Painting with Bob Ross' on PBS."

This example does not tell the reviewer what is meant by watching TV programs (the IV). Is this a preexisting variable or is it a variable that will be manipulated by the researcher? Also, the example above does not tell us how "desire to wear an eggplant on your head" (the DV) will be measured. Will it be assessed through observation, self report, or some other measure. If it is self report and an established measure is used, then what is the name of the measure. Further, it does not tell the reviewer what kind of relationship exists between the IV and DV.

The following example is more complete. "The proposed study will investigate the relationship between watching television programs with large purple stimuli (IV) and the desire to wear an eggplant on your head (DV: Assessed using the self report Vegetable Accessories Attitudes Text, Kangaroo & Greenjeans, 1979). It is expected that participants who are randomly assigned to a group that watches 47 hours of Barney Videos over a 5 day period will report more positive attitudes toward wearing an eggplant on their head in public, compared to participants assigned to a group that watches 47 hours of Painting with Bob Ross videos over a 5 day period."

You may or may not be able to achieve this level of specificity regarding your hypothesis, but it is the ideal to shoot for.

3 Also include a description of your literature search strategy (i.e., General Key Words/ Specific Key Words / Subject Terms you are searching, and how you are combining them AND, OR, NOT), and a description of how much (number of hits) and the type of information you have been able to find (empirical articles, review articles, etc.).

-- an empirical article is one that reports the results of a single study (or series of studies, usually 2-3 at the most) where data was collected from a sample and the focus of the article is the finding from this study. You can usually recognize an empirical study, because it will have an introduction (usually not labeled), a methods section, a results sections, a discussion section, and sometimes a conclusions section. The paper that you are writing for this class is a an empirical study.

-- a review article is one that presents an integrated summary of a very large number of studies. Essentially it is like the introduction and conclusions of an empirical article without all the other stuff. Also, it is considerably longer than an empirical article. When you are first starting your literature review, a review article is the most helpful. It presents a nice overview of the way that a particular variable has been or group of variables have been addressed in the literature (including theories that have been applied to them, the ways they have been measured, and the results that have been consistently found by different researchers). These types of articles are ideal as well, because their reference sections can be a great source of articles for you to include in your paper and they are generally the classic articles in that field.

-- Sometimes you will find Meta-Analyses or Review papers with Meta-Analyses in them . Theses types of articles statistically summarize the results of several studies. They take the data reported in multiple articles testing the same thing (i.e., articles that replicate each other) and then average their findings together to see if there is a statistically significant association between the variables of interest. These articles help us decide whether testing certain hypotheses is worth our time or not.

-- Remember, Avoid Dissertations (labeled in Psych Info as Dissertation Abstracts International). They are long, not peer reviewed, and if they were worth a damn they would have been published. Later in your career, if you are publishing your own research you should include dissertations in your lit review, but for now skip them.

-- Also, ultimately your final report's reference section will consist of no less than 10 articles. All of these articles must be primary sources. The three article types listed above are primary sources. Also included are, Scholarly Books (where the whole book is written by the same author(s) and Scholarly Book Chapters (from books edited by one or more editors, where each chapter is written by different author(s)). Secondary sources do not count toward your Six. Secondary sources include Textbooks, Newspapers, Magazines, Web Pages (unless it is the electronic posting of a scholarly journal, e.g. Psychological Bulletin, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Gender Roles, etc), etc. If you are not sure if it counts ask.

The thesis paragraph and your description of the literature search strategy should be typed and double spaced, with 1 inch margins, 12 pt type in an appropriate font (Times New Roman or Courier) . This paper must conform to the style described in the fifth edition of The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

-- A title page, abstract, references, tables, etc. are not necessary. Just type a normal paragraph, but appropriate grammar, measurement units, and language usage should be employed.