

APSU Writing Center
Writing a Proposal

What Is a Proposal?

- A proposal is a formal plan or request that presents an idea for change, action, or research and explains how it will be carried out. While proposals vary by purpose and assignment, all effective proposals clearly address the same core questions.

Key Points to Include

- Your proposal should clearly answer the following:
 - What do you want to do?
 - How do you plan to do it?
 - How will the proposal and its outcome affect you and others?
 - What has already been done in this area?
 - Why are you qualified to carry it out, or how does your skill set support the plan?
 - How long will it take?
 - What costs are involved?
 - How will you evaluate your results?

Important Things to Keep in Mind

- Do not assume your reader has prior knowledge of your topic.
- Be thorough, clear, and specific in all explanations.
- Avoid vague word choice and detail matter, vague ideas weaken proposals.

Structure of a Proposal

- The structure of your proposal depends heavily on the assignment.
 - Some professors provide a detailed outline, so make sure to check your assignment sheet.
 - Review the assignment carefully and ensure all required elements are included.
 - Answer every question fully so the proposal is clear and complete.
 - Pay close attention to required source types (example: scholarly journals or databases).
 - Use the assignment instructions as your basic outline when possible.

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Proposal Format

Title Page

- Follows the format specified by your instructor.

Abstract

- Provides a brief overview of the entire proposal.

Introduction

- Usually one paragraph that:
 - Introduces the problem
 - Explains what is being proposed
- Often elements often form the thesis for both the proposal and the final research paper.

Background

- This section explains the context of the problem:
 - Discuss relevant past and current research
 - Clearly define the research problem
 - Explain what has already been accomplished
 - Demonstrate your confidence and potential contribution
 - Show why further research or action is needed

Description of the Proposal

- This is the core of the proposal and the main focus for reviewers.
- Your explanation should:
 - Be professional and detailed
 - Show confidence in both your topic and your plan
 - Be realistic about what can be accomplished
 - Clearly state assumptions or hypotheses
 - Maintain a focused scope
 - Include a detailed plan and timeline
 - Explain how results or data will be evaluated



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References

Babson College. (2012, January 17). *Writing a successful proposal*.

<https://www.babson.edu/media/babson/assets/teaching-research/writing-a-successful-proposal.pdf>

University of Illinois Library. (n.d.). *Help & services — Writing a research proposal*.

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/proposal.html>



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Writing a Proposal Outline

Abstract: Write a brief 150-250 word overview. What you plan to do, how will you do it?

Introduction: Introduce the issue you are addressing. Explain what is being proposed.

Background: Explain background information. Discuss previous research and solutions.

Description: Explain the purpose and goals of the proposal. How will you carry out the proposal?

Qualifications: Explain why you are suited to carry out this proposal.

Conclusion: Summarize the proposal and reinforce why it should be approved.