

Proposal Writing

APSU Writing Center Handout

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.

Title Page

Follows the format specified by your instructor.

Abstract

Provides a brief overview of the entire proposal.

Introduction

Usually one paragraph that:

Introducing 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 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

Abstract: Write a brief 150–250-word overview. What do 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.

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>