

## The Research Proposal

### What is the purpose of the proposal?

The purpose of a proposal is to give your instructor a basic idea of what will be discussed in your research paper. However, a proposal is *not* a mini-research paper.

A proposal should have a specific, narrow topic. The topic should be interesting and original. The one-sentence thesis statement should state the topic and the stance that you will take on that topic. It has to be argumentative.

### Examples

*The tight control the American Medical Association has over medical doctors and registered nurses affects the way patients view hospitals.*

*Because of the changes in medical care and insurance, the emergency room has become a crowded doctor's office.*

### Research

Always begin your research with some idea of what your topic will be. Next, go to the library for sources so you can narrow the topic. If you are not sure where to start, ask a librarian.

Make sure not use citations from encyclopedias. Also, do not use anything that is out of date (anything more than five years old may be considered as such). Also, make sure not to use magazines.

However, you may use specialized encyclopedias (e.g., *At Issue*). Caylib, the online catalog at the library, is also an excellent reference source.

Academic journals are especially useful. Many of these can be accessed through *Expanded Academic*. You may use newspapers, but make sure that they are national newspapers (e.g., *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Post*), unless your topic is tied to a specific geographical area.

Interviews may also be used if the interviewee knows the topic well.

### Writing the proposal

After you have narrowed your topic and you have a working thesis, it's time to write your proposal. The proposal should be double-spaced, in MLA format, and about two to three pages. Remember that each paragraph should be at least seven sentences.

First, identify the topic and discuss the controversy surrounding your topic. Also, discuss why you chose this particular topic and why you find it interesting.

Next, describe your research strategy. Where are you finding your information, and how are you going to use it? What are you finding, and, conversely, what are you not? Where else are you going to look?

Finally, discuss how do you think the paper is going to look. What will the shape of your paper be? Basically, this section should be an outline in prose form.

The last page of your proposal should be the bibliography. This is set up much like the Works Cited page of a research paper. It should be doubled-spaced and alphabetized. However, there is one important difference. The bibliography page should include every source that you have consulted, including sources that are not necessarily mentioned in your proposal.