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CHAPTER**1****Introduction to Research Writing****Purposes and Audiences for Research Writing**

People write for many different reasons. They may want to share personal experiences, offer opinions on various subjects or conduct business. School writing often includes research assignments which rely largely on a review of published articles. Some research projects, especially those in science classes, involve original research in which students identify research questions, conduct tests and collect data to find answers. Although such projects may sound difficult, in many ways they are more exciting than research reports that rely only on secondary sources. Not only does the collected data give the writer something specific to say, but the research actually helps to create knowledge, and the writer becomes the 'expert' in this small area. Most important, the writer gains valuable skills for the kind of writing he or she will likely do later in life.



You are probably more familiar with research reports than you think. Every day radio, television, newspapers and magazines report the results of some 'study'. Depending on the intended audience, the report may be quite technical or quite easy to follow. These studies may provide entirely new information on an issue, they may confirm earlier studies, or they may even contradict earlier studies. Food products are often studied for their effects on health; political surveys are conducted to determine the public's view on some issue; the entertainment and consumer goods industries try to predict consumer habits; and science researchers often uncover secrets about the natural world.

1. Work in small groups to see whether you can recall at least one study from each of the following categories. Briefly identify (a) the focus of the study as you remember it and (b) the audience it was probably meant to influence. Share your group's list with the class.

Food _____

Politics _____

Entertainment _____

Consumer Goods _____

Science _____

Identifying a Research Problem

Finding a Research Topic

Research questions originate from some personal experience, observation or interest of the researcher. Look at the paragraph preceding the sample student essay. What experience did she have that resulted in her research on this topic?

► Try It

Using the topic you selected for your own research project, describe your reason for conducting the investigation.

Keeping the Audience in Mind

Who is the student writer's audience? _____

Why would her audience find this information useful? _____

► Try It

Apply the same questions to your own research project.

Writing the Statement of the Problem

The introduction of a research essay is often titled 'Statement of the Problem'. In this section, the writer explains the problem that the research will address. It also tells the purpose of the research, that is, what the research will attempt to answer about the problem. It is important that the researcher begin with an open mind. Personal opinions have no place in objective research.

What problem does the student writer identify? _____

What is the purpose of her study? _____

Does she express any bias or personal opinion? _____

► Try It

Write your own statement of the problem.

CHAPTER**3****Research Writing in Social Sciences**

Social sciences, which include such courses as geography, history, politics, psychology, sociology, religion and anthropology, are usually about people relating to other people in various times, places and cultures. Research reports in these courses begin as questions about some type of human behaviour. Research writers begin their writing process by reviewing articles already written on a subject. This step is called *secondary research*. After reviewing the existing literature, they do *original research*. In this chapter you will examine a model essay and complete activities that will show you how to do both by following these steps:

- choosing a research problem
- reviewing secondary sources
- writing a review of literature
- stating a formal research question
- conducting original research
- reporting the results
- concluding the report
- listing sources

ANTHROPOLOGY
GOVERNMENT
PSYCHOLOGY
GEOGRAPHY
RELIGION
SOCIOLOGY
HISTORY

► Try It

Add your suggestions to the list of social science research questions below:

‘Have girls achieved equal opportunity in school sports programs?’

‘Are teenagers today more accepting of social differences than teenagers 30 years ago?’

‘Why are tattoos controversial in some cultures and accepted in others?’

‘Does television advertising make us buy certain products?’

‘Is a job in air traffic control a good profession for the future?’

In this chapter you will read a sample essay, written by a student who wanted an answer to this question: What impact does retrenchment have on individuals and families? As you read the sample essay, notice that the writer follows the research process steps outlined above. After you finish reading the sample essay, you will be guided through steps in the writing process that will help you with your own research assignment.

Conducting Original Research

Stating a Formal Research Question

Once you have written your review of literature on your topic, it is time to state a revised question, which you can research yourself. Your research will go beyond what your sources have already written on the subject; therefore, this second part of your research report is called *original research*. The student who wrote 'The Experience of Retrenchment' expressed her initial question in her title, reviewed what published sources had already said on her topic, and then set up a research method for finding the answer to her question in her own community.

Designing a Data Collection Method

To answer her revised question, the writer of the retrenchment research essay designed, administered and analysed the results of an interview. Other useful methods for collecting data include surveys, lab tests, observation and product sampling. The best method depends on the research question. What data collection method would best suit each question below? Why?

The manufacturer claims that Dawn dishwashing detergent really takes grease out. Does it?

Career counsellors say that becoming a legal secretary is a good career choice. Is that true in my area?

The media say young people are more materialistic today than they were 30 years ago. Are they?

Use the survey below to collect data on the question: 'Is violence a problem in our schools?'

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Do you think there is too much violence in our school? | yes or no |
| 2. Have you ever observed a violent act in school? | yes or no |
| 3. Does violence create problems for students in our school? | yes or no |
| 4. Should police be called to our school when violence occurs? | yes or no |
| 5. Which of the items below influence(s) violence (circle as many as you like)? | |

TV Gangs Drugs Friends Movies Family Other _____

Reporting the Results

Analysing and Reporting Data

Using the data from your research survey on violence, complete the chart below showing the number of 'yes' and 'no' responses for each question. Also, total the number of responses for each item in question #5. Finally, list all the responses given for 'other'.

1. Do you think there is too much violence in our school?	Number of yes ___ no ___ answers
2. Have you ever observed a violent act in school?	Number of yes ___ no ___ answers
3. Does violence create problems for students in our school?	Number of yes ___ no ___ answers
4. Should police be called to our school when violence occurs?	Number of yes ___ no ___ answers
5. Which of the items below influence(s) violence (circle as many as you like)?	
TV _____ Gangs _____ Drugs _____ Friends _____ Movies _____ Family _____ Other _____	

As you report your findings in a research report, you must explain all data. For each of the items above, write an explanation below of the survey participants' responses and your conclusions based on their responses. Also, explain any flaws you see in the method or data.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

► Try It

Restate your research question, design a method of data collection, and analyse the results for your own research problem.

