



# How to Create a Writing, Presentation, or Project Proposal

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A writing, presentation or project proposal is a detailed guide or plan for future work towards a complete project. This gives your instructor the chance to look at your ideas and make sure that it is a topic that can generate a good paper, presentation or project. A proposal is a document that is usually broken up into the following sections or headings: Topic, Goals and Objectives, Rationale/Justification, Evaluation of Data Sources, Theories, and sometimes, an Annotated Bibliography.

## Topic

This will be your shortest section (one line) and is there simply to identify your topic and subject matter. It will look, for example, like this:

Topic: Boom and Bust Cycles; or, Polygamous Marriages in Canada

## Goals and Objectives

In this section you will discuss what you hope to achieve through the project, define terms and concepts, and create a hypothesis. In writing this section of your proposal, you should be thinking about questions such as: What am I hoping to prove through this project? What do I think the outcome of my research will be? What terms and concepts will I use that need definition? Be especially careful to define your terms and concepts. For instance, if your project deals with boom and bust cycles in the Alberta economy, the concept of “boom and bust” economies needs to be explained.

## Rationale/Justification

Part of the purpose of the Rationale or Justification section is to explain why you chose this particular topic. In doing so, you are forced to examine the relevance and importance of the topic you propose to explore in your work. In this section, you must also discuss why your topic is an issue in the literature that you've read.

## Evaluation of Data Sources

When doing research for your project proposal, you will need to evaluate your sources. This means that you'll need to ask and answer some questions about the material you have chosen. Some of these questions include: Is it a Canadian source? When was it written? What is the gender of the author? Does the author have any biases about the subject? Is the source peer reviewed?

When researching for a project proposal, it is wise to steer away from “wikis”. Wikipedia and other wikis are a good place to get background information on a topic, and to get a general overview of a topic, but they are not academically credible sources. However, Wikipedia articles have bibliographies, which can be a great jumping-off point for starting your research. Other sources that are not recommended for academic proposals include newspaper and magazine articles. Newspaper and magazine articles are not necessarily peer reviewed and are not considered academically credible. However, they are great for background reading to help you develop your understanding of your topic.

## Theories

Next, include a section that details any theories you will be using in your eventual project. What theories apply to your hypothesis? What theories are used by researchers doing work on your topic? Are there any sociology, psychology or political science theories that inform your topic?

## Annotated Bibliography

Finally, in the last section of your proposal, you will often write an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is simply a list of sources that you have used in your research.

More information on annotated bibliographies is available in the handout “Annotated Bibliography” on the Learning Support Centre website.

[http://old.gprc.ab.ca/departments/library/site\\_pages/learning\\_support\\_centre/main\\_learning\\_support.html](http://old.gprc.ab.ca/departments/library/site_pages/learning_support_centre/main_learning_support.html)

Finally, be sure to include a title page. It should include your name, the date, the title of your proposal, and your instructor's name.