

How to Write Qualitative Research

What is Dissertation Methodology? The methodology is perhaps the most challenging and laborious part of research. Essentially, the methodology helps in understanding the broad, philosophical approach behind the methods of research you chose to employ in your study. This means that your methodology chapter should clearly state whether you chose to use quantitative or qualitative data collection techniques or a mix of both. You will be required to provide justifications as to why you preferred a certain method over the others. If you are trying to figure out exactly how to write methodology or structure methodology for a dissertation, this article will point you in the right direction. Students must be sure of why they chose a certain research method over another. "I figured out" or "In my opinion" statements will not be an acceptable justification. So, you will need to come up with concrete academic reasons for your selection of research methods.

What Are the Typical Contents of Methodology? The methodology generally acts as a guideline or plan to exactly how you intend to carry out your research. This is especially true for students who must submit their methodology chapter before carrying out the research. Your methodology should link back to the literature review and clearly state why you chose certain data collection and analysis methods for your research/dissertation project. The methodology chapter consists of:

philosophical approach

data collection methods

research limitations

ethical considerations (if any)

data analysis methods For those who are submitting their dissertation as a single paper, their methodology should also touch on any modifications they had to make as their work progressed. However, it is important to provide academic justifications to all choices made by the researcher. Choosing your Methodology and Research Design The theme of your methodology chapter should be related to your literature review and research question(s). You can visit your college or university library to find textbooks and articles that provide information about the commonly employed research methods. An intensive read of such books can help you devise your research philosophy and choose the appropriate methods. Any limitations or weaknesses of your chosen research approach should also be explained, as well as the strategies to overcome them. Tip: In order to research well, you should read well! Read as much research articles (from reputed journals) as you can. Seeing how other researchers use methods in their studies and why will help you justify, in the long run, your own research method(s). Regardless of the chosen research approach, you will find researchers who either support it or don't. Use the arguments for and against articulated in the literature to clarify why you decided to choose the selected research design and why the research limitations are irrelevant in your research. Also Read: Dissertation Research Question Examples

Does your Research Methodology Have the Following? Great Research/Sources

Great Research/Sources Perfect Language

Perfect Language Accurate Sources If not, we can help. Our panel of experts makes sure to keep the 3 pillars of Research Methodology strong. Get a Quote Now! Learn More

How to Structure Methodology Chapter of your Dissertation The typical structure of the methodology chapter is as follows: Research design and strategy Philosophical approach Methods of data collection and data analysis Ethical considerations, reliability, limitations and generalisability Note: In research jargon, generalisability is termed as external validity. It means how generalisable your research findings are to other contexts, places, times, peoples, etc. External validity is expected to be significantly high especially in quantitative studies. According to USC-Research Guides (2017), a research design's primary function is to enable the researcher to answer the research questions through evidence effectively. Generally, this section will shed light on how you collected your data. The researcher will have to justify their choice of data collection methods such as research that was reviewed, use of data tools (interviews, phone surveys, questionnaires, observation, online surveys, etc.) and the like. Moreover, data sampling choice should also be clearly explained with a focus on how you chose the ethnicity, group, profession and age of the participants. What type of questions do you intend to ask the respondents; how will they help to answer your research questions or how will they help to test the hypothesis of research? It is recommended to prepare these questions at the start of your research; develop your research problem and research questions. This approach can allow the room to change or modify research questions if your data collection methods do not give the desired results. Tip: It's a good practice to keep referring to your research questions whilst planning or writing the research design section. This will help your reader recall what the research is about; why you have done what you did. Even though this technique is recommended to be applied at the start of every section within a dissertation, it's especially beneficial in the methodology section. In short, you will need to make sure that the data you are going to collect relates to the topic you are exploring. The complexity and length of the research design section will vary depending on your academic subject and the scope of your research, but a well-written research design will have the following characteristics: Sheds light on alternative research design options and justifies why your chosen research design is the best to address the research problem.

Clearly specifies the research questions that the research aims to address or the hypothesis to validate.

Explain how the collected data will help address the research problem and discusses your research methods to collect the data.

Philosophical Approach behind Methodology This will discuss your chosen philosophy to strengthen your research and the research model. Commonly employed research philosophies in academia are: Interpretivism

positivism/post-positivism

pragmatism

constructivism This list is not exhaustive, though; there are several other research philosophies that you could adopt. The choice of the philosophy will depend on many factors, including your academic subjective and the type and complexity of the research study. Regardless of which philosophy is employed, you will be required to make different assumptions about the world. Once you have chosen your research philosophy, the next step will describe your research context to answer all the questions, including when, where, why, how and what of your research. Essentially, as a researcher, you will be required to decide whether you will be using a qualitative method, quantitative method or a mix of both. Did you know: Using both qualitative and quantitative methods leads to the use of a mixed-methods approach. This approach also goes by another seldom-used name: eclectic approach. The process of data gathering is different for each method. Typically, you would want to decide whether you will adopt the positivist approach, defining your hypothesis and testing it against reality. If this is the case, you will be required to take the quantitative approach, collecting numerical data at a large scale (from 30 or more respondents) and testing your hypotheses with this data. Key point to remember: Collecting data from at least 30 respondents/participants ensures reliable statistical analysis. This is especially true for quantitative studies. If the data contains less than 30 responses, it won't be enough to carry out reliable statistical analyses on such data. The other option for you would be to base your research on a qualitative approach, which will point you in a direction where you will be investigating broader areas by identifying people's emotions and perceptions of a subject. With a qualitative approach, you will have to collect responses from respondents and look at them in all their richness to develop theories about the field you are exploring. Finally, you can also use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods (which is becoming increasingly popular among researchers these days). This method is beneficial if you are interested in putting quantitative data into a real-world context or reflecting different perspectives on a subject. Research philosophy in the "research onion." Source: Saunders et al. (2012) Methods of Data Collection and Data Analysis

This section will require you to clearly specify how you gathered the data and briefly discuss the tools you used to analyze it. For example, you may choose to conduct surveys and/or interviews as part of the data collection process. Similarly, if you used software such as Excel or SPSS to process the data, you will have to justify your software choice. In this section of your methodology chapter, you will also have to explain how you arrived at your findings and how they are reliable. It is important to note that your readers or supervisor would want to see a correlation between your findings and the hypothesis/research questions you based your study on at the very beginning. Your supervisor or a dissertation research assistant can play a key role in helping you write the methodology chapter according to established research standards. So, keep your supervisor in the loop to get their contributions and recommendations throughout the process. Ethical Considerations, Reliability and Limitations Other important sections of your methodology are:

Ethical Considerations Always consider how your research will influence other individuals who are beyond the scope of the study. This is especially true for human subjects. As a researcher, you are always expected to make sure that your research and ideas do not harm anyone in any way. Discussion concerning data protection, data handling and data confidentiality will also be included in this brief segment. How did you ensure your participants'/respondents' anonymity and/or confidentiality? Did you remove any identifiable markers after conducting the study (post-test stage) so that readers of your research wouldn't be able to guess the identity of the participant/respondent? Was personal information collected according to the purpose of the research? (For instance, asking respondents their age when it wasn't even relevant in the study). All such ethical considerations need to be mentioned. Key point: Even though there is no established rule to include ethical considerations and limitations within the methodology section, it's generally recommended to include it in this section, as it makes more sense than including it, say, after the discussions section or within the conclusion. This is mainly because limitations almost always occur in the methodology stage of research. And ethical considerations need to be taken while sampling, an important aspect of the methodology. Here are some example ethical issues that you should be mindful of: Does your research involve participants recalling episodes of suffering and pain? Are you trying to find answers to questions considered culturally sensitive either by participants or the readers? Is your research, analysis and findings based on a specific location or a group of people? All such issues should be categorically addressed and a justification provided for your chosen research method by highlighting the study's benefits.

Reliability Is your research study and findings reliable for other researchers in your field of work? To establish yourself as a reliable researcher, your study should be both authentic and reliable. Reminder: Reliability means the extent to which your research can yield similar results if it was replicated in another setting, at a different time, under different circumstances. If replication occurs and different findings come to light, your (original) research would be deemed unreliable.

Limitations Good dissertation writers will always acknowledge the limitations of their research study.

Limitations in data sampling (did your research study collect data from only one country?) can decrease your results' reliability. A classic example of research limitation is collecting responses from people of a certain age group when you could have targeted a more representative cross-section of the population. Be humble and admit to your own study's limitations. Doing so makes your referees, editors, supervisors, readers and anyone else involved in the research enterprise aware that YOU were also aware of the things that limited your study. Admitting them will make you a bigger person in their eyes, not the contrary. Note: Limitations are NOT the same as implications. Sometimes, the two can be confused. Limitations lead to implications that is, due to a certain factor being absent in the study (limitation) for instance, future research could be carried out in a setting where that factor is present (implication).

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Dissertation Methodology Example At this point, you might have a basic understanding of how to craft a well-written, organised, accurate methodology section for your dissertation. An example might help bring all the aforementioned points home. Here is a dissertation methodology example in pdf to better understand how to write methodology for a dissertation. [Sample Dissertation Methodology](#)

Types of Methodologies 1. A Scientific or Lab-Based Study A methodology section for a scientific study will need to elaborate on the reproducibility and meticulousness more than anything else. If your methods have obvious flaws, the readers are not going to be impressed. Therefore, it is important to ensure that your chosen methodology is vigorous in nature. Any information related to the procedure, setup and equipment should be clearly stated so other researchers in your field of study can work with the same method in the future if needed. Variables that are likely to falsify your data must be taken into the equation to avoid ambiguities. It is recommended to present a comprehensive strategy to deal with these variables when gathering and analysing the data and drawing conclusions. Statistical models employed as part of your scientific study will have to be justified and so, your methodology should include details of those statistical models. Another scholar in the future might use any aspect of your methodology as the starting point for their research. For example, they might base their research on your methodology but analyse the data using other statistical models. Hence, this is something you should be mindful of. 2. Behavioral or Social Sciences-Based

Dissertation Like scientific or lab-based research, a behavioural and social sciences methodology needs to be built on the same lines. The chosen methodology should demonstrate reproducibility and firmness so other scholars can use your whole research methodology or a part of it, based on their research needs. But there are additional issues that the researcher must take into consideration when working with human subjects. As a starting point, you will need to decide whether your analysis will be based on qualitative data, quantitative data or mixed-method of research, where qualitative data is used to provide contextual background to quantitative data or the other way around. Here are some questions for you to consider: Will you observe the participants undertaking some activity, ask them to fill a questionnaire, or record their responses during the interviews? Will you base your research on existing evidence and datasets and avoid working with human subjects? What are the length, width, and reach of your data? Define its scope. Is the data highly explicit to the location or cultural setting you carried your study in or can it be generalised to other situations and frameworks (reliability)? What are your reasons and justifications? While you will be required to demonstrate that you have taken care of the above questions, it is equally important to make sure that you address your research study's ethical issues side-by-side. Of course, the first step in that regard will be to obtain formal approval for your research design from the ethics bodies (such as IRBs " institutional review boards), but still, there will be many more issues that could trigger a sense of grief and discomfort among some of the readers. 3. Humanities and Arts Dissertation Project The rigour and dependability of the methods of research employed remain undisputed and unquestionable for humanities and arts-based dissertations as well. However, the way you convince your readers of your humanities and art dissertation's thoroughness is slightly different. Unlike social science dissertation or a scientific study, the methodology of dissertations in arts and humanities subjects needs to be directly linked to the literature review regardless of how innovative your dissertation's topic might be. For example, you could demonstrate the relationship between A and B to discover a new theoretical background or use existing theories in a new framework. The methodology section of humanities and arts-based dissertations is less complex, so there might be no need to justify it in detail. Students can achieve a seamless transition from the literature review to the analysis section. However, like with every other type of methodology, it is important to provide a detailed justification of your chosen methodology and relate it to the research problem. Failing to do so could leave some readers unconvinced of your theoretical foundations' suitability, which could potentially jeopardise your whole research. Make sure that you are paying attention to and giving enough information about the social and historical background of the theoretical frameworks your research methodology is based on. This is especially important if there is an essential difference of opinion between researchers of the past and you. A justification of why opposing schools of thought disagree and why you still went ahead to use aspects of these schools of thought in your methodology should be clearly presented for the readers to understand how they would support your

readings. 4. A Dissertation in Creative Arts Some degree programs in the arts allow students to undertake a portfolio of artworks or creative writing rather than produce an extended dissertation research project. However, in practice, your creative research will be required to be submitted along with a comprehensive evaluative paper, including background information and explanation that hypothesises your innovative exercise. While this might seem like an easy thing to go, critical evaluation of someone's work is highly complex and notorious in nature. This further reinforces the argument of developing a rigorous methodology and adhering to it. As a scholar, you will be expected to showcase the ability to critically analyse your methodology and show that you are capable of critically evaluating your own creative work. Such an approach will help you justify your method of inventing the work, which will give the readers the impression that your research is grounded in theory.

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What to Avoid in Methodology? All chapters of a dissertation paper are interconnected. This means that there will undoubtedly be some information that would overlap between the dissertation parts of the paper. For example, some of the text material may seem appropriate to both literature review and methodology sections; you might even end up moving information from pillar to post between different chapters as you edit and improve your dissertation. However, make sure that you are not making the following a part of your dissertation methodology, even though it may seem appropriate to fit them in there: 1. A long review of methods employed by previous researchers. It might seem relevant to include details of the models your dissertation methodology is based on. However, a detailed review of models and precedents used by other scholars and theorists will better fit in the literature review chapter, which you can link back to. This will help the readers understand why you decided to go in favour of or against a certain tactic. 2. Unnecessary details readers might not be interested in. There is absolutely no need to provide extensive details of things like lab equipment and experiment procedures. Having such information in the methodology chapter would discourage some readers who might not be interested in your equipment, setup, lab environment, etc. Your aim as the author of the document will be to retain the readers' interest and make the methodology chapter as readable as possible. While it is important to get all the information relating to how others can reproduce your experiment, it is

equally important to ensure your methodology section isn't unnecessarily long. Again, additional information is better to be placed within the appendices chapter. 3. Raw data Avoid presenting any numerical data collected as part of your research. The methodology is not the section to provide raw data, even if you are only discussing the data collection process. All such information should be moved to the appendices section. Note: Even if you feel some finding or numerical data is crucial to be presented within methodology section, you can, at most, make brief comments about such data. Its discussion, however, is only allowed in the discussions section. Choosing the Right Methodology for Your Dissertation Even before starting to work on a dissertation paper, it is common for a researcher to develop broad ideas about the type of research methods and models they will want to base their dissertation on. After a thorough assessment of the existing literature, critical evaluation of other scholars' work in your area of study and regular communication with your supervisor, you will be able to develop your ideas further and choose an appropriate methodology for your research. Postgraduate students are more likely to be already aware of the opposing schools of thought in their preferred area of study. They may have a broad understanding of the diverse theoretical frameworks. These include their epistemological and ontological positions. This is part of research paradigms; there are 4. Research paradigms your research follows are generally included within the methodology section, too. On the other hand, this may well be your first experience of performing independent research in a broad area, especially if you are an undergraduate student. This means that evaluating different research methods and schools of thought could become an extremely perplexing and overpowering task for you. However, it is important to note that you will be required to review, in detail, the existing literature and tweak your own research questions to develop a methodology for your dissertation, whether you are writing an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation. As you read the literature available on your research topic, you will figure out what approach will work best to address your research problem. Essentially, this means that you should be able to finalise your research methodology once you have read enough literature. Before writing the literature review, you can use theories and insights to position the methodology as a natural, organic and flawless progression. Your methodology won't only be determined by the modes of inquiry or schools of thought that appeal to you most; there are likely to be practical considerations that determine how you approach your problem. For instance, unless you happen to have access to a particle accelerator at your university, the chances are your quantum physics project will be based on theoretical projections rather than physical experimental data.

What Makes Your Methodology Stand Out? The factors which can decide determine if your dissertation methodology is great depend on whether you are writing an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation, for starters. Undergraduate dissertations are, of course, less complex and less demanding. At most universities in the UK,

undergraduate students are required to exhibit the ability to conduct thorough research as they engage for the first time with theoretical and conceptual frameworks in their chosen research area. As an undergraduate student, you will be expected to showcase the capacity to reproduce what you have learnt from theorists in your academic subject; to transform your leanings into a methodology that would help you address the research problem; to test the research hypothesis as mentioned in the introduction chapter. A great undergraduate-level dissertation will incorporate different schools of thought and make a valuable contribution to existing knowledge. However, in general, undergraduate level dissertationsâ€™ focus should be to show thorough desk-based and independent research skills. Postgraduate dissertation papers are much more compound and challenging because they are expected to make a substantial contribution to existing knowledge. Depending on the academic institute, some postgraduate students are even required to develop a project published by leading academic journals as an approval of their research skills. It is important to recognise the importance of a postgraduate dissertation towards building your professional career, especially if your work is considered impactful in your area of study and receives citations from multiple scholars, enhancing your reputation in academic communities. Even if some academics cite your literature review and conclusion in their own work, it is a well-known fact that your methodology framework will result in many more citations regardless of your academic subject. Other scholars and researchers in your area of study are likely to give much more value to a well-crafted methodology, especially one they can use as the starting point for their own research. Of course, they can alter, refine and enhance your methodology in one way or another. They can even apply your methodological framework to a new data set or apply it in a completely new situation that is irrelevant to your work. Finally, postgraduate dissertations are expected to be highly convincing and demonstrate in-depth engagement. They should be reproducible and show rigour, so the findings and conclusions can be regarded as authentic and reliable among scientific and academic communities. The methodology is the door to success when it comes to dissertation projects. An original methodology that takes into consideration all aspects of research is likely to have an impact on the field of study. As a postgraduate student, you should ask yourself Is my dissertation methodology reproducible and transferable? Producing a methodology that others can reproduce in the future is as important as answering research questions. Conclusion The methodology chapter can either make or break the grade of your research/dissertation paper. Itâ€™s one of the research elements that leaves a memorable impression on your readers. So, it would help if you took your time when it comes to choosing the right design and philosophical approach of your research. Always use authentic academic sources and discuss your plans in detail with your supervisor if you believe your research design or approach has flaws in it. Did this article help you learn how to write a dissertation methodology and how to structure dissertation methodology? Let us know in your comments. Are you Struggling to Develop a Thorough and Well-rounded Dissertation Methodology? At Research Prospect, we have Masterâ€™s and Ph.D. qualified dissertation writers for all

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