

Proposal Activity 1

This is the first of a couple of assignments that will help you write your research proposal. This assignment involves some legwork and some writing!

Writing

As a group, agree on a topic in psychology that you are interested in researching; that is, a psychological topic that you have questions about. The topic can be anything broadly psychological and your question can be equally broad. For example, you may ask “What is the most effective form of psychotherapy?” or “What role does biology play in emotions?” Do not worry yet about asking a “good scientific” question. Part of this exercise is about how to go from an interesting and personally relevant question about psychology to a good scientific one.

Once you agree on a topic a write a short paragraph about the topic. Your paragraph should include your question and why you think it’s an important one. With minimal editing, what you write will be the opening paragraph of your proposal.

Leg work

As a first step from going from an interesting and personally relevant question to a good scientific one is to do a literature search on the topic. The literature search and subsequent review will help you determine the next best study to be done. To simulate that process, I will ask you and other group members to find ONE relevant research paper on your topic. That one study will serve as your “literature review” for your proposal. We will spend the next two weeks learning how to critically evaluate that research paper and how to determine the next best study to address weaknesses you will inevitably find in the study. Describing the one study you select and next best study will be the research proposal you hand in.

We will learn together how to find research papers in journals using a search engine, called PsycInfo. It is available on-line through the Weber State library. Next class, you will have a chance to search PsycInfo for your one relevant study. Remember, the only studies from PsycInfo you can use as your literature review for the purposes of this exercise are **empirical articles in refereed journals**. PsycInfo is designed to generate other kinds of titles than just refereed empirical articles, including book chapters, theoretical articles, and non-refereed articles. **DO NOT SELECT BOOK CHAPTERS, THEORETICAL ARTICLES, REVIEW ARTICLES, OR POPULAR MAGAZINE ARTICLES AND FOCUS ONLY EMPIRICALLY-BASED JOURNAL ARTICLES.**

You only need to find only one article per group to complete the project. You may be lucky enough to find a journal article that is directly downloadable from PsycInfo. If not, you will have to find a journal article from the journals that WSU carries or ask me to help, as I may have access to electronic version of papers not carried by WSU). Once you find an article and download it (or get it some other way), make a photocopy for each person in the group and one for me. Please bring it to each class during the period in which we are working on the proposal. Of course, a real literature review will involve many more papers, but even only with one paper, you will get the idea of what is involved in writing a literature review.