

Name:

Period:

# DISCOVER PSYCHOLOGY: DESIGNING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Welcome to your summer assignment for AP Psychology! This assignment is designed to prepare you for the research methods component of the course, improve your scientific literacy, and expose you to a variety of topics within psychology. By completing this assignment, you will gain valuable skills in critical thinking, research design, and ethical decision-making, all of which are essential for success in the field of psychology. Selecting a research question will not only guide your exploration into specific areas of psychology but will also provide insight into what psychology is and how it contributes to understanding human behavior, cognition, and emotions. Through this process, you will have the opportunity to delve into contemporary issues or debates in psychology, applying psychological theories and methodologies to real-world problems.



## Assignment Instructions:

- **Select a Research Question:** Choose a specific research question within the field of psychology that interests you. Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior, exploring topics like why people think, feel, and act the way they do. For this assignment, you'll choose a research question that interests you within psychology. Think about things that intrigue you about how people behave, think, or feel. Your question should be clear, concise, and relate to issues or debates happening in psychology today. For example, you might ask:

*How does using social media affect teenagers' mental health and happiness?*

**Behavioral Analysis:** Psychology examines how individuals behave and interact with their environment. Social media usage is a behavior, and psychologists are interested in understanding how it influences teenagers' actions, attitudes, and emotions.

**Cognitive Processes:** Psychology also explores cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and perception. Social media can affect these processes, impacting how teenagers think about themselves, their peers, and the world around them. It can shape their self-esteem, social comparisons, and emotional responses.

- Please note that you will not be conducting the actual study but will be planning what it would entail. This planning phase is called a research proposal, where you outline the details of your proposed study.

### Example Research Questions:

- **The Effects of Music on Mood:** How does listening to different types of music impact teenagers' emotions?
  - **Screen Time and Sleep Quality:** Does the amount of time teenagers spend on screens affect the quality of their sleep?
  - **Study Habits and Academic Performance:** Do different study habits influence teenagers' grades?
  - **Peer Pressure and Decision Making:** How does peer pressure affect teenagers' decision-making processes?
  - **Social Media and Body Image:** Does social media use influence teenagers' perceptions of their own bodies?
  - **Exercise and Stress Relief:** How does physical activity impact teenagers' stress levels?
  - **Healthy Eating and Mood:** Is there a relationship between teenagers' diets and their moods?
  - **Pets and Well-being:** How does owning a pet affect teenagers' mental health?
  - **Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:** Do mindfulness techniques help teenagers reduce stress?
  - **Video Games and Attention Span:** Does playing video games affect teenagers' ability to concentrate? Do frequent gamers have shorter attention spans than those who play less often?
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- **Conduct Online Research (Literature Review):** Begin your literature review by conducting online research related to your chosen research question. Use search engines like Google or educational websites to explore information on your topic. Look for reliable sources such as reputable websites, online databases, and articles from trusted organizations or educational institutions.
  - **Summarize Key Findings:** As you explore online resources, take notes on the key findings, facts, and insights related to your research question. Summarize the main points of each source in your own words. Think critically about the credibility and reliability of the information you find online. Consider factors such as the author's expertise, the website's reputation, and whether the information is supported by evidence.
  - **Synthesize Information:** Synthesize the information you've gathered from online sources to form a cohesive understanding of your research question. Identify common themes, important insights, and areas where further investigation may be needed. Consider how the information from different sources contributes to your understanding of the topic.
  - **Citing Your Sources:** Remember to cite all the online sources you reference in your literature review. Provide information such as the author (if available), website or publication title, URL, and publication date. Use a consistent citation format such as APA style to ensure proper attribution of sources. In psychology, the American Psychological Association (APA) style is the predominant format used for writing and citing academic papers, research articles, and other scholarly works.

- **Choose Your Research Design:** Decide on the type of study you want to conduct. You have several options:
  - *Experimental:* You manipulate one variable to observe its effect on another variable. For example, you might investigate the impact of music on studying by assigning participants to either a study group with music or a control group without music.
  - *Correlational:* You examine the relationship between two variables without manipulating them. For instance, you might explore the relationship between screen time and sleep quality by collecting data on both variables and analyzing their correlation.
  - *Descriptive Methods:* You gather detailed, non-numerical data to explore phenomena in-depth. This includes:
    - *Structured Interviews:* Conducting interviews with predetermined questions.
    - *Surveys:* Administering questionnaires to gather information.
    - *Naturalistic Observation:* Observing behavior in natural settings.
    - *Case Studies:* In-depth examination of individuals, groups, or events.
  
- **Participant Selection Criteria:** Determine who will participate in your study and why they're suitable for your research question. Consider factors such as age, gender, and any specific characteristics relevant to your topic. For example, if you're studying the effects of exercise on mood in teenagers, your participants might be high school students aged 14-18.
  
- **Data Collection Procedures:** Outline how you'll collect data from your participants. Depending on your research design, this could involve various methods:
  - *Surveys or Questionnaires:* Create a set of questions related to your research question and administer them to your participants.
  - *Observations:* Watch and record behavior in a natural setting, such as observing interactions between peers in the school cafeteria.
  - *Interviews:* Conduct structured or semi-structured interviews with participants to gather qualitative data.
  - *Experiments:* Plan the steps involved in conducting your experiment, including how you'll manipulate variables and measure outcomes.
  
- **Measures or Instruments:** Specify the tools or instruments you'll use to collect data. This might include:
  - *Questionnaires or surveys:* Decide on the questions you'll ask and how participants will respond (e.g., Likert scale, multiple-choice).
  - *Observation checklist:* Outline the behaviors or characteristics you'll observe and how you'll record them.
  - *Interview guide:* Prepare a list of questions or prompts to guide your interviews and ensure consistency across participants.
  - *Experimental materials:* Describe any materials or equipment needed to carry out your experiment, such as stimuli or apparatus.

- **Ethical Considerations:** Consider ethical issues related to your research, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and potential risks to participants. Ensure that your study complies with ethical guidelines and respects the rights and well-being of participants. For example, if you're conducting surveys or interviews, obtain consent from participants and assure them of confidentiality.
- **Feasibility Assessment:** Evaluate the feasibility of your proposed methodology in terms of resources, time, and access to participants. Consider any practical constraints and adjustments you may need to make to ensure the smooth implementation of your study.
- **Consider Ethical Implications:** Analyze the ethical implications of your proposed research and justify your decisions regarding participant recruitment, informed consent, and potential risks. Discuss how you will ensure the ethical conduct of your study and protect the rights and well-being of your participants.

### Submission Guidelines:

- **Research Proposal:** Your submission should include a well-written research proposal that outlines your study in detail. This proposal will serve as a comprehensive plan for your research project.
  - Begin with a clear statement of your research question. This is the central inquiry that your study aims to address. Make sure it is specific and focused.
  - Provide a brief summary of the literature relevant to your research question. Include key findings from existing studies and highlight any gaps or unanswered questions in the literature.
  - Detail your chosen methodology, explaining how you plan to conduct your study. Specify whether you will use surveys, interviews, observations, or other research methods, and justify your choices.
  - Discuss any ethical considerations related to your research. Explain how you will ensure the well-being and rights of your participants, and address any potential risks or concerns.
  - Evaluate the feasibility of your proposed study. Consider factors such as time, resources, and access to participants. Identify any challenges you may encounter and propose solutions.
- **Written Report:** Your research proposal should be presented in the form of a written report. Write clearly and concisely, organizing your report into sections corresponding to each component of the proposal (research question, literature review, methodology, ethical considerations, feasibility assessment).
  - Use headings and subheadings to clearly delineate each section of your report. This will help readers navigate your proposal and understand its structure.
  - Provide sufficient detail in each section to convey your research plan effectively. Include relevant information, but avoid unnecessary verbosity.
  - Ensure that your writing is well-organized and coherent. Use transitions to connect ideas between sections and maintain the flow of your report.

- **Supplementary Materials:** In addition to your written report, you may include supplementary materials to support your research proposal. This could include presentation slides, diagrams, charts, or any other visual aids that enhance understanding of your study.
  - Ensure that your supplementary materials are relevant and effectively communicate key aspects of your research proposal. Use visuals to illustrate complex concepts or data, but avoid overwhelming your audience with unnecessary detail.
- **Submission Format:** Submit your completed research proposal and any supplementary materials electronically, following the formatting guidelines provided by your teacher or school. Double-check your submission to ensure that all components of your research proposal are included and properly formatted. Proofread your report for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation before submitting.

Submission Due Date: August 8, 2025

*In this AP Psychology class, we will delve deeply into research methods to prepare you for the research-heavy multiple-choice and free-response question sections of the exam. Understanding research methods is essential for interpreting psychological studies and conducting your own research in the field. By completing this research proposal as a summer assignment, you will not only assess your science background but also familiarize yourself with important research concepts that we will explore throughout the course. This assignment will serve as a foundation for your journey in psychology, guiding you through the process of formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, designing methodologies, and considering ethical considerations. Embracing this opportunity to engage in scientific inquiry will equip you with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in AP Psychology and beyond.*

\*Utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) or any form of automated tools to complete the assignment is strictly prohibited. The completion of this assignment is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding, critical thinking skills, and ability to independently engage with the material. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in severe consequences, including disciplinary action and a detrimental impact on academic reputation. It is essential to uphold the principles of academic integrity, honesty, and personal responsibility in all academic endeavors.

Criteria	Excellent (5)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (1)
Research Question	The research question is clear, concise, specific, and highly relevant to contemporary issues in psychology. It demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic.	The research question is clear and relevant to contemporary issues in psychology. It provides a specific focus for the proposed study.	The research question is vague or lacks relevance to contemporary issues in psychology. It does not provide a clear focus for the proposed study.
Literature Review	The literature review is comprehensive and thoroughly summarizes key findings from multiple reliable sources. It demonstrates critical thinking and synthesis of information.	The literature review summarizes key findings from relevant sources, demonstrating a good understanding of the topic. Some critical analysis and synthesis are evident.	The literature review is superficial or lacks depth. It may rely on limited sources or fail to critically evaluate the information presented.
Methodology	The methodology is well-developed, clearly outlining the chosen research design, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, and measures/instruments. It demonstrates a strong understanding of research methods.	The methodology provides sufficient detail on the chosen research design, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, and measures/instruments. It demonstrates a basic understanding of research methods.	The methodology lacks clarity or detail in describing the chosen research design, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, or measures/instruments. It may demonstrate misunderstandings of research methods.
Ethical Considerations	Ethical considerations are thoroughly analyzed and discussed, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to participant rights and well-being. Potential risks are identified, and strategies for ensuring ethical conduct are proposed.	Ethical considerations are adequately addressed, with some analysis of participant rights and potential risks. Strategies for ethical conduct are outlined, but may lack depth or detail.	Ethical considerations are incomplete or superficial. There may be a lack of analysis of participant rights or potential risks, and strategies for ethical conduct may be missing or unclear.
Feasibility Assessment	The feasibility assessment is comprehensive and thoughtfully evaluates practical constraints such as resources, time, and access to participants/data. Potential challenges are identified, and realistic solutions are proposed.	The feasibility assessment provides a reasonable evaluation of practical constraints and identifies potential challenges. Some solutions are proposed, but they may lack specificity or realism.	The feasibility assessment is superficial or lacks depth in evaluating practical constraints. Potential challenges are not adequately addressed, and proposed solutions may be unrealistic or missing.
Writing Clarity and Organization	The research proposal is exceptionally well-written, with clear organization and coherent presentation of ideas. Writing is concise, precise, and free of grammatical errors.	The research proposal is well-written, with good organization and presentation of ideas. Writing is clear and mostly free of grammatical errors.	The research proposal is poorly written, with unclear organization or presentation of ideas. Writing may be verbose, unclear, or contain numerous grammatical errors.
Overall Quality of Submission	The research proposal demonstrates exceptional quality in all aspects, exceeding expectations for a summer assignment. It reflects deep engagement with the topic and a high level of effort and understanding.	The research proposal meets expectations for a summer assignment, demonstrating proficiency in most aspects. It reflects a solid effort and understanding of the topic.	The research proposal falls below expectations for a summer assignment, with notable weaknesses in several aspects. It may reflect limited effort or understanding of the topic.
Total Score			