

Research Proposal Template¹

I. Introduction. A clear, concise statement of the puzzle you are addressing, of your proposed resolution, and of the empirical work you will do.

II. The dependent variable. What you are trying to explain and why, as well as some sense of the range of variation in the dependent variable. Remember you are trying to convince others that this is a question worth asking (and answering).

III. Synthetic literature review. Develop an analytical summary of the existing attempts to explain your dependent variable or solve your puzzle. Try to put existing arguments into categories. Make sense of the literature, don't just catalog it.

IV. Your proposed explanations. Present a coherent logical case for each proposed explanatory variable, going step by step and leading up to working hypotheses.

V. Operationalization. Explain how you will measure your dependent and explanatory variables, and how you will evaluate the relationship among them.

VI. Methodology. Describe in some detail the ways in which you will gather data (statistics, interviews, archives, secondary literature, etc.), perform data analysis (econometrics, historical case studies, etc.).

VII. Implications. Explain what you expect the completed project to add to our understanding of some broader set of analytical or empirical issues in Political Science.

Append a bibliography of references cited.

Recommended length: 15 pages. Remember:

***Be concise, be precise.**

***Ask only questions to which there may be answers.**

***Provide logical underpinnings to all hypotheses.**

***Demonstrate the feasibility of your research design.**

***Indicate the broader relevance of your research.**

¹ Adapted from Jeff Frieden

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