

Planning Research Time

Planning work time for research can be particularly challenging, especially for students and new scholars. You will need to schedule time for various preparation activities, such as researching extant literature on your phenomena of interest, designing your study to be rigorous, ethical, and credible, choosing an appropriate form of data analysis, submitting IRB paperwork, etc. To help you succeed, start by developing a plan to tackle the work.

To develop your research plan, start by considering the following issues and questions.

Research Plan – Create a tentative research plan. Take the time now to decide where, when, and how you will complete your research. Use the questions below to plan where, when, and how you will complete your proposed research.

1. Where to work?

- a. Make a list of all the places where you can get work done (office, home sofa, coffee shop, library). If you are going to work from home, have a dedicated space (if at all possible) and make an agreement with your family and/or friends that this area is your working area. You may also share the amount of time you expect to be working and left alone.
- b. Rank the places you have written down from the places where you can be the most productive to the least productive.
- c. If you'll be working "in the field" consider where you can write up your (formal) fieldnotes, download observation photos, etc. when you return from the field. What is your plan for ensuring that you will have adequate field time *and* post-field time to compile your notes?

2. When to work?

- a. In a calendar or organizer, write in your daily professional *and* personal responsibilities. Calculate the number of hours you'll need to allocate to each responsibility that you have.
- b. Try to find at least 10-15 hours per week outside of those scheduled times, and block that time off for research tasks.

3. Tools to use?

- a. Not all research work needs to be completed while sitting in front of a computer. Take stock of your digital devices. Does your smartphone support an app that will allow you to complete some tasks while you are on break from work, standing in line at the bank, and/or waiting to pick up your children? Can you listen to interview recordings or relevant research articles while you are driving, on a bus or train, or while exercising? (However, remember that this time is not 100% attention time, so it is not a time for processing complex or difficult content).

Weekly Schedule – Use a planner or calendar to plot out your research work time and your work location for at least the first two weeks of research conceptualization. This will help you

establish your work rhythm and figure out what works and does not work. Below is a list of things to consider:

1. **Schedule where to work.** For research tasks that require more concentration or higher level thinking, such as assessing empirical research articles for your literature review, creating your research instruments/protocol (e.g., interview guide), or working on data analysis, schedule time in your most productive places. For tasks that require less concentration, such as copyediting, sending emails, etc., schedule time in places that are the most enjoyable for you.
2. **Schedule when to work.** When looking at the time you have allotted to work each day, be sure to account for any time you need to transition to your chosen working place. For example, if you plan to get one hour of work done at Starbucks, you should schedule more than an hour so you have time to get there, settle in, and get a drink.
3. **Specify tasks to complete during each work period.** As you progress in your research planning, you'll have different tasks to complete. Decide on the specific task you plan to complete for each scheduled block of time. Some tasks, such as preparing for data collection, require multiple steps (e.g., 1. Writing your data collection procedure(s), 2. Submitting for and obtaining IRB approval, and 3. Recruiting your sample and collecting data). Make sure to schedule time for each task.
4. **Get your tools and resources ahead of time.** If you have a research task that requires specific tools (e.g., an audio recorder for interviewing) or software (e.g., ATLAS.ti for data analysis), schedule time to obtain these tools and request any funding that you may need to acquire these tools.

Use the template below to plan your research time!

Weekly Research Work Plan (Template)		
Develop a research plan based on weekly tasks that you'll need to complete for your research.		
Where will you work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are you most productive? • Where do you enjoy working? • Where is the best place to write? • Do you have dedicated space to do your work? 	When will you have time to work on weekly research tasks? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that not all research tasks require that you be sitting at a computer. • You can divide a research task into steps rather than complete it all at one time. 	What will you accomplish at those specified times and places? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure you are being reasonable with your time commitments (e.g., work, family, etc.). • It is best to overestimate time needed to complete tasks rather than underestimate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember, this schedule may need to be adjusted on select weeks to accommodate bigger research tasks.
	Monday:	
	Tuesday:	
	Wednesday:	
	Thursday:	
	Friday:	
	Saturday:	
	Sunday: (I suggest that you try to take one full day or at least a half-day off—to rest and recoup, be with family/friends, etc.)	