

# **7 Non-Negotiable Lessons for Writing a Research Proposal**

## **1. Start with the Structure, Not Sentences**

Before writing anything, decide:

- What type of research are you proposing?
- Who is your target audience (funders, supervisors, ethics board)?
- What is the logical flow your reader expects?

Use frameworks like SHARP for guidance.

## **2. Your Introduction Is Not a Dump of Definitions**

Avoid quoting textbooks. Instead:

- State the relevance of your topic
- Summarize the current state-of-the-art
- Identify the gap/problem
- Clearly state your objectives and hypotheses
- Use a Fact-Hypothesis Matrix (FaHM)

## **3. Your Methodology Is Your Credibility**

Be precise:

- Describe your study design, population/sample
- Include a Variable-Indicator-Method Matrix (VIM)
- Outline tools, instruments, statistical analysis, and ethics

## **4. Operational Planning Shows You're Serious**

Stand out with:

- A schedule (Gantt charts)
- HR responsibilities
- Equipment/material needs
- A realistic, justified budget

## **5. Your Proposal Is Not Complete Without Appendices**

Add:

- Draft questionnaires
- Key references
- Your academic CV
- Letters of support or institutional backing

## **6. Write for Reviewers, Not Just for Yourself**

Tips:

- Be concise and use clear headings
- Define terms once
- Avoid unnecessary jargon
- Follow word counts and formatting rules

## **7. Your Abstract Is the First-and Sometimes Only-Test**

Ensure your abstract:

- States the problem
- Highlights your objective
- Summarizes your methods
- Hints at expected outcomes or impact

## **Conclusion**

Doing research is important, but convincing others to support it is a skill. This guide is your foundation for writing proposals that are taken seriously.