

Sage Research Methods Data and Research Literacy: How-to Guide

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Title.		<i>How to Gather Data and Evidence: The Second Stage of The Social Research Toolbox, QGAP</i>
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Methodology categorization		Other / Not Applicable
Discipline		Guides should be cross-disciplinary . If the content of your guide is specific to a discipline(s), please let your editorial contact know.
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Sage Research Methods: Data and Research Literacy is an educational resource which will equip undergraduate and postgraduate students and researchers with the tools to **understand and critically evaluate research methods and methodologies, manage and interpret data, and conduct robust social research with integrity** and confidence.

Guides will be **authoritative and accessible** resources which **combine research principles with research practise**, incorporating practical and ethical considerations, to help prepare students and researchers for working with data, evaluating research, and conducting their own research.

When writing your guide, we recommend using **real-world research examples** to keep the reader engaged. You may choose to use one consistent example throughout the guide, or multiple examples.

Each how-to guide is limited to **4000 words**, with a 10% leeway. For topics which require more than 4000 words there may be the option to write multiple guides; please raise this with your editorial contact if required. Guides may include direction to further resources through which the reader can explore each topic in more depth.

You can view two how-to guides from previously published collections here:

- From [Diversifying and Decolonizing Research](#)
- From [Doing Research Online](#)

Please ensure you have read the **manuscript guidelines** before you begin writing your guide.

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References should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style, 7th edition, and should contain the digital object identifier (DOI) where available. Sage will not accept guides that are incorrectly referenced; please ensure accuracy before submission. For help on reference styling see <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>.

Abstract

The abstract should be a concise summary of your how-to guide. What aspect of the research process, working with data, or specific methodological and practical challenges will your guide address? It should be succinct and enticing, and should incorporate key words and concepts discussed in the body of the text. Please do not cite references within the abstract.

[Insert here: Maximum of 250 words]

This guide offers a concise overview of how to gather data and evidence to answer your research question. It forms part of the social research toolbox, or QGAP, series and so focuses on the second stage of the research process. You will learn how to critically evaluate existing evidence and literature, and the role that reviewing literature plays in both refining your research question and preparing you to gather research data. Different research design choices (including the distinction between qualitative and quantitative designs) are then outlined before the most popular social research methods are summarised. The guide concludes with a discussion of the key principles for gathering data ethically. The reader should be aware that this is a short introductory guide which should get you started on the gathering part of the social research toolbox. There are a range of sources suggested for further reading throughout the guide.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes must explain what the reader will learn from reading your guide. How will the reader be able to apply what they have learned to their own research practice?

Consider what the **most important aspects of this topic** are. Bear in mind the guide is limited to 4000 words. **The content and structure of your guide should explicitly correspond with these learning outcomes.**

See the links below for guidance on writing effective learning outcomes:

- [Writing learning outcomes](#)

- [Blooms Taxonomy Action Verbs](#)

Insert 3–5 learning outcomes, **beginning with an action verb**, completing this statement:

Having read this guide, readers should be able to . . .

- Recognise the role of the literature review in refining research questions and preparing to gather research data.
- Understand different research design choices and make informed decisions about which approach is appropriate for their research question.
- Identify and describe popular social research methods.
- Recognise key ethical principles and how they might apply to gathering research data.

Introduction

Build on the abstract to further describe what methodological issues will be discussed in this guide; what the student reader will gain from reading the guide; how the guide will be structured; which real-life research examples will be drawn upon, etc. You may wish to begin with a brief positionality statement.

This guide forms part of the social research toolbox or, QGAP, series, which offers a simple way of conceptualising the research process. You can learn about QGAP by watching this short animation [[hyperlink to be added once available](#)], and instructors can download some teaching PowerPoints that support the series here [[hyperlink to be added](#)]. Within the toolbox, there are four stages; 1) Questions, 2) Gathering data and evidence, 3) Analysing the data and evidence and 4) Presenting answers to your research questions. The four stages occur in all social research projects (whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method), and though they have been presented in a linear way for teaching purposes, the reality is that each stage is shaped by the others, and it is usual to move between stages at different points of the research journey, depending upon the type of research you are doing.

In this guide, the focus is on the ‘Gathering’ stage of the social research toolbox – which is a rather large stage to attempt to fit into a short guide! You should approach this guide as a starting point for learning more. Continuing from ‘How to develop your research question’ (Wheeler, 2024a), the guide begins by considering the important role that consulting existing evidence and literature plays in both refining your research question and preparing you to

gather your data. We then consider different research design choices – including the distinction between qualitative and quantitative designs – and the popular research methods you could employ to help you to answer your research question. When designing a strategy for how to gather data or evidence, research ethics are paramount and so the guide closes with an overview of four basic ethical principles that all research projects should apply.

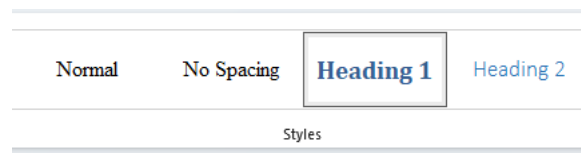
Main Body of Text

Write the body of your guide below. The text should be between **2,000 - 4,000 words**.

We encourage the use of **headings** and sub-headings to **structure your guide into sections**.

We recommend using **800 words or fewer for each section**.

For section headings please use Word Style ‘Heading 1’. For any sub-headings within sections use Word Style ‘Heading 2’. To use Word styles in Microsoft Word, select the text you want to format, click the “Home” tab and then use the “Styles” pane.



Every section must be followed by a **Section Summary**.

Each Section Summary should consist of 3-5 bullet points, written out as full sentences, which summarize the key information in the section.

Moving from Q to G: Reviewing existing evidence and literature

This section offers a segway between the stage of developing your research question (Q) and the stage of gathering data and evidence (G). As was stressed in the previous guide, your research question is likely to change as your ideas around your research topic develop. In formulating your research question, you need to read published evidence and literature to better understand how your research will contribute to the field. I remember during my PhD, my research question changed substantially following a thorough literature review. I originally had a research question which focused on how Fairtrade was promoted through advertising, but I decided after reading the literature and talking with my supervisors that I was both more interested in Fairtrade consumers than promotional tactics, and that there was limited existing research with Fairtrade consumers. You need to gather the existing evidence to better understand how your research question will offer a new perspective on the issues you want to address. But when gathering the evidence, you must critically evaluate its relevance and suitability to your research question in order to craft a literature review, or use this evidence as a source of data.

Critical evaluation of sources

Being able to recognise ‘good’ evidence is essential when looking for sources related to your research question. There are a range of sources you could consult from academic literature - which has undergone a peer review process - to grey literature (policy or technical reports from government and other organisations), archival material, organisational websites and other media sources. Some of these sources might become data that is analysed in the next stage of your research – for example in a post-doctoral project researching recycling systems in England, how private and public sector organisations promoted recycling on their websites and in technical reports helped inform my primary qualitative research with consumers about their recycling practices (Wheeler & Glucksmann, 2015).

It can be tempting to put your research question into a search engine like Google and hope that what comes back will be relevant - but critical evaluation skills are needed to sift through search results, and it is likely you’ll need to consult several databases and library systems before you will have consulted a comprehensive range of sources. I find The Open University’s PROMPT framework (OU, 2020) very helpful when introducing students to the critical evaluation of sources (see Table 1). PROMPT offers a series of questions that students can use to help them to evaluate each source they find. In an era of Generative AI (GenAI) systems, with chatbots (like ChatGPT, CoPilot and Bard) producing human-like text, critical evaluation skills become even more important. GenAI cannot find all the relevant sources for you or write your literature review, but when used responsibly and critically, it may be one source (of many) that will help refine your research question and point you in the direction of credible primary sources.

Table 1: The PROMPT framework for evaluating sources (adapted from OU, 2020)

Prompt	Key questions to ask yourself about the source
Presentation	How clearly is the information presented and communicated?
Relevance	Is the source relevant to your research question?
Objectivity	Is the source motivated by a particular agenda, does it use emotive language and are there hidden/vested interests?
Method	Is it clear how any data presented were collected? Were those methods appropriate? What was the sample and how are diverse voices/opinions represented?
Provenance	Is it clear where information in the source has come from? Who is the author of the source, and should you trust them? Does the source reference other trustworthy sources?
Timeliness	When was the source written and does this meet your requirements?

Literature Reviews

Once you have consulted a wide range of sources, you will then need to write a review that situates your research question in the broader context of other existing scholarship. There is much written about how to approach literature reviews and a diversity of types of literature review (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Morgan Brett, 2025; Page et al., 2021; Ridley, 2012). Essentially, a literature review is a persuasive piece of writing whose purpose is to demonstrate the need for your research project to be undertaken. O’Leary (2017) makes a distinction between ‘self-educative’ and ‘formal’ literature reviews. Self-educative reviews

are used in the earlier stages of your research (closer to the Q stage) to help inform you of what is happening in a field; to highlight gaps in the literature to help you refine your research question; and to explore appropriate methodological and theoretical approaches that might help you answer your research question. Formal reviews, conversely, are written for a specific audience (perhaps an academic supervisor, funder, journal editor) to communicate the key debates in the field and show how your research will contribute to this, as well as to argue for the significance of your research question and its need to be addressed. The formal review is usually written just before you start gathering your data (start of the G stage), but it will often be returned to as you analyse your data (A) and present your answers to your question (P).

Students often struggle with formal literature reviews because they involve reading a large amount of evidence, absorbing relevant information, and communicating this whilst maintaining their own voice. Good project management from the start is crucial. Referencing software like EndNote, Zotero (free), or Mendeley (free) can help store sources, organize notes, and keep track of your reading. When reading a source, make notes on its key argument, your critical comments, its relation to other sources, and relevance to your research. Literature reviews are often organized thematically, grouping related studies – ‘it should tell a story, not be a list’ (Thomas, 2017, p. 62) For example, in my Fairtrade consumption project, my literature review had sections on the history of ethical consumption, sociology of consumption, and consumer-citizenship which were all distinct but related areas of literature. Always stay focused on your research question, ensuring the review justifies the need for and approach of your study.

Section Summary

- *Moving from the Q-stage to G-stage involves consulting a wide range of sources, and it is likely that your research question will evolve as you better understand the existing evidence in your field*
- *Using a framework like PROMPT will help you to critically evaluate sources for their credibility and relevance to your research*
- *A well-structured literature review should demonstrate the significance of your research, showing how it addresses existing gaps in knowledge. Literature reviews can be either ‘self-educative’ (early stages) to inform your question and research design or ‘formal’ (later stages) to argue for the necessity of your study.*

Gathering data through research design and methods

A review of the literature can give you hints about research design and what methods to use to gather the data to answer your research question. The form of your research question will also include assumptions about what sort of approach will be appropriate. Indeed, you may remember that I encouraged you to interrogate your research question according to the ‘5 W’s’ (what, where, when, who and why) as you were developing your research question in

the previous guide (Wheeler, 2024a). Now you need to connect the insights you gained through that process to the question of ‘how’ you can answer your research question. In this section, you will be introduced to common research design choices and research methods in social research.

Research Design

Your research design is your overarching framework guiding ‘how’ you will gather and analyse your data within your project. Research design choices are shaped by both theoretical and practical considerations. On the one hand, the design is about enabling you to gather robust data to answer your research question and contribute to the body of knowledge. But on the other, achieving this research design in practice relies on a range of contingent factors, like whether you can access your participants/sample, the cost and time of the research, the ethics of your design and the broader political and socio-cultural context which may influence your approach. For instance, like many researchers, I had to shift to online data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your design may evolve throughout the project as you assess its feasibility and make necessary adjustments.

Gilbert (2016, p. 37) identifies three main research design choices: ‘quantitative versus qualitative; cross-sectional versus longitudinal; and case versus representative’. Let’s consider each in turn. First, the qualitative/quantitative distinction which is often the design choice that research methods courses focus most upon when introducing social research. Quantitative research designs measure phenomena using numerical data, aiming to predict population-level effects (connecting this design choice to representative designs). When gathering data using quantitative research designs, researchers must transform abstract concepts (like attitudes or poverty) into measurable indicators. Often survey questions are designed with these indicators in mind or routine data collected for other purposes is transformed for variable analysis. However, there are debates about the reliability of quantitative designs because indicators may not measure what they claim, and cannot tell us why these associations exist. Qualitative research designs, on the other hand, seek to gather rich data from conversations, observations and various types of documents with a focus on describing the meanings and understandings that people ascribe to social phenomenon. Most qualitative designs do not seek to quantify because subjective meanings of both participants and researchers are an integral part of the data gathering process and these are not easily turned into a numeric form. While qualitative studies often cannot generalize to broader populations, they do allow for theoretical insights. The choice between quantitative and qualitative is likely baked into your research question and will be closely tied to the nature of ‘what’ you are studying and ‘why’ (linking back to the ‘5 W’s’). Of course, both quantitative and qualitative approaches may be needed to answer your research question, requiring a mixed-method design (see Creswell, 2013 for a discussion of mixed-methods designs).

The cross-sectional versus longitudinal choice relates to whether data is gathered at one moment in time (cross-sectional) from different individuals/cases or at repeated points in time (longitudinal) usually with the same individuals or case contexts. Much social research is cross-sectional because of the challenges of recruiting participants to engage in research at different points in time (with high levels of drop-out or attrition which can affect the validity of the study), or because we are interested in a specific historical event. However,

longitudinal designs offer opportunities to study ‘process and mechanism’ (Gilbert, 2016: p38) getting us closer to causal explanations and why things might be related to one another. To decide, you should think back to the ‘when’ question from your ‘5 W’s’ and consider whether gathering data at one time-period or many is required to answer your research question.

Finally, the case versus representative design choice refers to how participants or cases are selected, and is closely tied to the qualitative/quantitative distinction. If our research question seeks to understand experiences of a small group of people with specific characteristics – such as people living in a particular Fairtrade town – we need to select our sample or cases purposively. Usually, smaller numbers of people/cases are studied intensively in a case design and are strategically chosen by the researcher (e.g. non-probability sample). Multiple cases may be used for comparison, though single case designs are common in qualitative research (see Patton, 2002 for an overview of different case study designs). In contrast, representative designs (usually employed in quantitative projects) gather data from many people, documents or cases to generalise findings to a broader population (e.g. probability sampling). Techniques for ensuring representative samples are gathered are important for the next stage of the social research process (‘A’ or analysis) in quantitative projects. Statistical analysis is often based on the assumption of random sampling (that each person/case has an equal chance of being selected) and certain types of analysis are not possible if observations have not been gathered in this way. There are different ways of practically achieving a random sample and Gray (2014) offers a good overview of these. The case versus representative design choice relates to the ‘who’ and the ‘where’ questions from the ‘5 W’s’.

Research methods

Research design choices are often made with the techniques for gathering data in mind, so the discussion above has already touched minimally on research methods. A short guide is not the space to provide a detailed account of the many ways of gathering data in the social sciences, many of which have whole textbooks written about them. So instead, what I thought would be useful is a summary table of the most popular research methods, with an overview of some of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as a few suggested references for where you can find out more about these methods (see Table 2). It is possible to combine more than one research method in your study, for instance by combining two qualitative approaches (like observations and interviews) or a mixed-methods approach that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods within one project (see Creswell, 2013).

It’s important to remember that all research methods have strengths and limitations and these need to be weighed against practical considerations about what is feasible. In my own research projects, I have been faced with many choices about how best to gather data. Other choices could have been possible and may have led to alternative findings. Knowing why you made the choices you did and what shaped your decisions are important records to keep – this is sometimes referred to as a ‘decision trail’. I recommend starting a research journal before you start gathering your data as this will be a useful record of decisions as you move into the later stages of analysing the data/evidence (A) and presenting your findings (P).

Table 2: Summary of popular social research methods

Social research method	Brief Description	Key Strengths	Key weaknesses	Suggestions of where to go to learn more
Survey	Structured questionnaire consisting of mostly closed-end questions, usually administered to a large sample	Can obtain information from many people; easy for participants to complete; structured analysis; time and cost effective	Non-response rates are high; difficult to achieve representative sample; limited depth because of closed question format (open-ended questions challenging to analyse); hard to know if people understand the questions; response bias	(De Vaus, 2014; Eichhorn, 2021; Fink, 2003)
Experiments	Controlled studies that test cause-and-effect by manipulating one variable to observe its impact on another, conducted in labs, real-world settings, or during new policy implementation	Can infer cause-effect relationships; replicable method; control over variables meaning complex interactions between variables can be explored	Behaviours studied in a lab may not translate to real world settings; some topics are unethical to study using experiments; can be difficult to isolate variables in complex social systems	(Ariel et al., 2021; Coleman, 2019; Ritter et al., 2013)
Content analysis	Systematic analysis and interpretation of a carefully selected sample of different forms of communication, such as documents, social media posts, videos, images. It can also be used for analysis of qualitative interviews.	Flexible method for range of source types; suitable for both quantitative and qualitative research designs; useful for studying past events; non-intrusive method	Time-consuming to code large volumes of data interpretively; Limited by what documents and sources are available/accessible; interpreting content out of context can affect its validity; quantification of qualitative content can be mishandled; ethics of using public/private online data must be carefully considered	(Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2004; Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2012)

Observation	Researchers enter social settings (including digital contexts) and observe either as a participant or non-participant to better understand social phenomenon in context	Can observe what people do rather than what they say they do; can gain in-depth understanding of how everyday/'natural' contexts impact behaviour; flexible method; can be structured or more interpretive.	Being observed can change someone's behaviour; access to settings can be difficult; researcher identity will influence data collected; time consuming; unanticipated ethical issues can arise during an observation; findings may not be transferrable to other settings	(Gobo & Molle, 2017; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Lofland et al., 2006)
Interviews	In-depth conversations with individuals to understand and listen to their perspectives, narratives and life experiences. There are many approaches to interviewing according to disciplinary traditions, such as in-depth interviews, narrative interviews, and expert interviews.	Responsive method that produces rich data about participants' experiences, memories and feelings; flexible and versatile method; researcher can check their understanding of what participant says; good for sensitive topics and hard-to-reach populations	Quality of data depends on skill of interviewer; researcher identity will influence data collected; takes time to gather and analyse data; smaller sample sizes which may impact generalisability	(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; King et al., 2019; Morgan Brett & Wheeler, 2022)
Focus group	Group discussions (usually around 6-8 people) guided by a moderator, aimed at gathering diverse perspectives and exploring attitudes to a specific topic.	Good for obtaining wide range of views; offers insights into how people talk about issues in a natural context; a well-managed discussion can generate rich data because of group dynamics; often used early on in a project to unpack its dimensions or to generate survey questions	Group dynamics can be challenging to moderate; dominant talkers can skew the discussion; participants may not feel comfortable to express their views; logistically challenging; may not be suitable for very sensitive or controversial topics	(Barbour, 2007; Kitzinger J., 1994; Morgan, 2019)

Section Summary

- *Approaches to gathering data through research design and research methods will be shaped by your research question – highlighting the close relationship between the different stages of the social research toolbox.*
- *Research designs are influenced by both theoretical goals (e.g. achieving robust data that contributes to a body of knowledge) and practical constraints (e.g., time, cost, socio-political context, and access to participants).*
- *All research methods have strengths and weaknesses and choices between them should be carefully weighed with your ‘decision trail’ recorded in a research journal.*

Ethical considerations

Ethical principles are relevant at all stages of the social research toolbox, and you may remember from the previous guide that one of the key criteria for developing a ‘good’ research question was that it was ‘ethical’ (Wheeler, 2024a). I include a more detailed discussion of ethics at stage ‘G’ because by this point, you *must* have a strategy for ensuring ethical principles are upheld before any data is gathered. Whilst most research conducted in an academic setting will need to be reviewed by an ethics committee, all research in all settings should adhere to the four basic ethical principles (Morgan Brett & Wheeler, 2022, p. 81), which are summarised below:

- Preventing harm and avoiding risk and exploitation
- Being respectful and protecting the autonomy of your participants
- Managing the confidentiality of the data and maintaining the anonymity of respondents
- Offering clarity about the independence of the research and any intended possible uses of the research.

Ethical research principles were established after World War II and the 1946 Nuremberg Code which introduced the requirement for informed consent to participate in research. The atrocities that prompted the Nuremberg trials made clear that avoidance of harm or *beneficence* should be the primary consideration when undertaking any research project. Harm can come in different forms from physical harm to threats to safety, loss of self-esteem or status, embarrassment, stress, harm to development and invasion of privacy. It is important to carefully evaluate whether any potential harms to a participant outweigh any potential benefits of doing your research.

Communicating potential harms and benefits of research participation is key for ensuring informed consent. Informed consent means that research participants are made aware, *before* their participation, of the study’s purpose, their role, any risks and benefits and how their data will be used. This then allows them to make an informed and voluntary decision about whether to take part and ensures principles of autonomy and respect are established. Participants should have the right to withdraw at any time without feeling coerced. Consent procedures will vary according to the type of research method and level of participation

required. The signing of consent forms after reading an information sheet about the project is usually asked for by ethics committees but this will not be suitable for all research. Verbal consent may be more appropriate for research with vulnerable populations or in some cultural contexts. Survey researchers might opt for a simplified consent process, with information offered before the survey and an assumption that completing the survey indicates consent. Observations in public settings or of online interactions might make gaining individual consent of all those observed difficult, so care must be taken not to invade privacy and maintain confidentiality.

Managing data confidentiality should be a priority. If you are dealing with secondary data, for example, and you find revealing information, your duty of care to protect confidentiality persists. I recently analysed some survey data in which the school names of survey participants were present and so I removed this information from the file (turned it into an anonymised format) before I started analysis. It is important to have a plan around data management and ensure you keep confidential data safe. This is both about checking your participant's wishes around anonymity (after informing them of the risks of identity disclosure) and establishing a protocol for sensitive data storage and destruction. I have found in interview research that organisational representatives or those with a public profile often consent to being identified, but most other interviewees remain anonymous. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe require data storage within the region, so do check provider policies and use encrypted, password-protected services. I'll talk more about anonymising data in the next guide in the series (Wheeler, 2024b) but remember rules around data destruction only apply to personal data (or identifying information) so anonymised data does not need to be destroyed.

Prepare your information sheet about your project before you gather any data. Even if you are not seeking written consent, it's a good idea to have an overview for participants that details:

- what the project is about
- who has funded the research
- what participation involves,
- the risks and benefits of participation,
- how participants' data will be gathered and used,
- procedures for destroying personal data, and
- who to contact for further information.

Do think about all potential uses of the data – for example, I make clear that anonymised data will be used for research *and teaching* purposes, so I am able to use data in workshops and teaching materials, as well as other academic outputs. You might also want to consider whether you want to archive the data for other researchers to access in the future.

A key takeaway is that the ethical terms under which you gather your data will shape what you can do with it later (in your project, and beyond). Though ethical processes can feel bureaucratic, Morgan Brett & Wheeler (2022) stress the importance of working towards principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. Ask yourself if your actions pass the 'test of universality' (would you approve if others did the same to you?) and the 'test of publicity' (would you be comfortable if your actions were reported in the news?). Paying attention to

these principles is important to protect your participants, yourself as a researcher and the field for future researchers.

Section Summary

- *Ethical principles are central to all stages of the social research toolbox but are particularly important before data is gathered.*
- *The four key ethical principles that apply to all research projects are preventing harm, respecting participant autonomy, ensuring confidentiality, and being transparent about the research's purpose and outcomes.*
- *Ethical decisions made at the data gathering stage affect the possible uses of the data by you and others.*

Conclusion

Includes a **summary of the key lessons** discussed within each section of your guide.

What can readers learn from this guide and apply when conducting their own research and evaluating the research of others?

In this guide, we have considered the second stage of the social research toolbox and some of the key things that need to be considered when 'Gathering data and evidence' (G) that will answer your research question (Q→P). The guide began by acknowledging the important role that existing evidence, literature and other sources should play in refining your research question, offering theoretical and methodological insights, as well as acting as a source of data. Knowing how to recognise credible sources and evaluate their usefulness for your research purposes was stressed, with the PROMPT framework (OU, 2020) offering a helpful tool. Research design choices are closely connected to your research question and decisions must be made about whether the 'right' data to answer this question should be qualitative or quantitative (or mixed), gathered at one moment in time or over a period of time, from a small number of cases or a representative sample. Your decisions here will form the framework for your study and will also likely drive the choice of research method. However, these choices do not exist in a vacuum and feasibility (time, cost, ethics, researcher skills), as well as socio-political context, might be just as important for how you gather your data. Because choices can shift along the research journey for a variety of reasons, it was recommended that you keep a research journal to record your 'decision trail.' This journal will be especially important when it comes to 'Analysing the data and evidence' (A) – the next stage of the research toolbox – and presenting your findings. Keep in mind that all the stages of the research toolbox (QGAP) are connected, which was demonstrated through the discussion of ethical principles which shape what sorts of research questions can be asked and guide how data is gathered which in turn influences how data can be used for analysis and presentation. The next guide turns to the analysis stage of your research toolbox.

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions should:

- Test readers' understanding of your guide.
- Focus on relevant aspects of data and research literacy.
- Not require any information that is not included in this guide.

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions should not:

- Include 'all of the above' or 'none of the above' options, or implausible responses.
- Require information not included in the guide.

Example:

1. *What is critical reflexivity?*

a. An understanding of how a researcher relates to and actively engages with the complex contexts and dynamics within which the research is embedded. [CORRECT]

b. An understanding of how over-researched populations can experience research fatigue when directly engaged by researchers.

c. An understanding of anonymity and confidentiality in research.

Guidance for writing MCQs can be accessed using these links:

- [*Tips for writing effective multiple-choice questions*](#)
- [*The process of writing a multiple-choice question*](#)

[Insert three to five multiple choice quiz questions below. **Each MCQ must have three possible answers (A, B, or C), with one correct answer.** Please indicate the correct answer by writing [CORRECT] after the relevant answer.]

1. What is the role of a literature review in the research process?
 - a. To report on the first ten sources that Google or Chat GTP offers you when you type in your research question
 - b. To collect data from participants
 - c. To refine your research question and identify gaps in knowledge
(CORRECT)
2. When making research design choices, which factor is most likely to influence your decision?
 - a. The number of participants available

- b. The nature of your research question and the type of data needed to answer it (CORRECT)
 - c. The amount of funding you have

 3. Which research method is best suited for understanding how people experience and understand a specific social phenomenon in depth?
 - a. Experiments
 - b. Content analysis
 - c. Interviews (CORRECT)

 4. What is the most important ethical consideration when gathering data from human participants?
 - a. Preventing harm and avoiding risk and exploitation (CORRECT)
 - b. Ensuring the research is published
 - c. Collecting data as quickly as possible
-

Further Reading

Please ensure that the recommended readings, web resources, and cited references in the guide are inclusive, and represent a diversity of people. Given our global readership, we aim for content that allows individuals with a broad range of perspectives to see themselves reflected in our published resources.

[Insert list of up to six further readings here]

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage Publications. (good introduction to qualitative approaches)
 - Creswell, J. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
 - Kumar, R. (2014) *Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners* (4th Edition), SAGE (good introduction to quantitative approaches)
 - O’Leary, Z. (2017). *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project*. Sage.
 - Morgan Brett, B., & Wheeler, K. (2022). *How to do Qualitative Interviewing*. Sage.
 - Thomas, G. (2017). *How to do your research project: A guide for students*. SAGE Publications.
-

Web Resources

[Insert links to up to six relevant web resources here]

- Browse a selection of [Sage Research Cases](#) (search for those employing similar research designs and methods to your project) to hear from researchers in the field who have gathered data for their different projects, and discuss the practical opportunities and challenges.

References

[Insert bibliography of references cited in text here]

References should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style, 7th edition, and should contain the digital object identifier (DOI) where available. Sage will not accept guides that are incorrectly referenced. Please ensure accuracy before submission. For help on reference styling see <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>.

- Ariel, B., Bland, M., & Sutherland, A. (2021). *Experimental Designs*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529682779>
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- Morgan Brett, B. (2025). How to Use a Literature Review to Inform Research Design: A Case Study of ‘Thriving in Residential Care’. *SAGE Guides*.
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- Wheeler, K. (2024a) 'How to develop research questions: the first stage of the social research toolbox, QGAP'
- Wheeler, K. (2024b) 'How to analyse data and evidence: the third stage of the social research toolbox, QGAP'