

**Methods** sections are typically one of the easiest sections of your thesis or research paper to write. In fact, the methods section is often the section that many researchers write first. Amongst the reasons that researchers decide to write the Methods section first is because it is one of the few sections in which they already have enough information to begin writing before any data is collected. Methods sections are very variable across the disciplines, and even the term *Methods* is not always used, as when authors use *The Study* as their section heading. In some fields, it is common to have subsections in Methods that might deal with materials, the apparatus or tool used, definitions employed, the subjects or participants in the study, or the statistical procedures used. Methods also vary according to how much information and explanation they contain (Swales & Feak, 2013, p. 224).

The Methods section should provide enough detail such that your study could be replicated. It is not important to include certain aspects that are unlikely to be important in the outcome, like: the color of the room, or the details of the furniture (as long as they are not independent variables). In addition, you should not repeat information that was presented in another section. If you describe a questionnaire or survey in the Materials section, do not also describe it in an additional subsection. A Methods section generally includes the following subsections: *Participants*, *Materials*, and *Procedure*. Each subsection receives its own heading. (Altermatt, 2008).

Some examples of commonly used subsections; not all subsections may be required:

### ***Participants***

1. *How many?*
2. *How were they selected?*
3. *Demographics information?*

### ***Materials***

1. *The source of the questionnaire or survey*
2. *What the questionnaire or survey is designed to measure*
3. *The number of items in the questionnaire or survey*
4. *One to three sample items. "If you are creating a new questionnaire, place the full set of items in an Appendix and refer the reader to the Appendix: "(see Appendix for complete list of questionnaire items" (Altermatt, 2008).*
5. *Any reliability estimates that might be obtained from previous research on the topic*

### ***Procedure***

1. *Instructions to participants*
2. *Informed consent*
3. *Assignment to conditions/variables/participants*

4. *Experimental manipulations*
5. *Duration*
6. *Debriefing*

*(Updated 08/07/2025)*

Altermatt, B. (12 October 2008). The Method Section. Hanover Psychology.  
[https://psych.hanover.edu/classes/ResearchMethods/Readings/Method\\_Section.pdf](https://psych.hanover.edu/classes/ResearchMethods/Readings/Method_Section.pdf)

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2017). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (p. 224). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.