

Writing a Proposal: Part I

I. Think in VERBS.

What questions will my paper attempt to answer?

What will I do first?

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| examine | explain |
| read | define |
| interview | re-define |
| describe | |
| summarize | |
| analyze | |
| compute | |

What will I do second?

Why will I do this?

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| so that | |
| in order to | propose |
| | suggest |
| | develop recommendations |
| | identify |

II. Ask questions.

What is the impact of industrial relocation to rural areas in China?

How are farmers being affected?
What is the effect on the environment?
Has relocation been received well or badly?
What are some of the problems?

How are modern architecture and vernacular architecture influencing each other in country X?

Has modernism destroyed the vernacular style in country X?
Has modernism been changed so that a new style has emerged?
Are there any benefits to this new style? Are there drawbacks?

III. Listening Exercise.

List as many questions as you can that you hope to investigate in your final paper / project.
Don't worry about organization – just think in questions.

Share your questions with an interested party. He / she may help you focus the questions more clearly or get you thinking about areas you hadn't thought of.

IV. Embedding questions in NOUN CLAUSES.

Yes / No **Has relocation been successful?**

WHETHER My paper will investigate **whether relocation has been successful.**

Yes / No Are cash benefits more useful than housing benefits?

WHETHER I am going to investigate the impact of cash payments for housing in contrast to providing the housing itself on a group of displaced persons in Beirut, Lebanon, over the past five years.

My paper will address the question of whether cash benefits are more useful than housing benefits in helping dislocated persons achieve stability.

WH-Question **What were the real motives** behind the selection of the design for the World Trade Center monument?

My paper will investigate **what the real motives were** for the selection of the design for the new World Trade Center monument.

WHO

WHAT

WHEN

WHERE

WHY

HOW

HOW MUCH, etc.

V. Methods

What methods will you use? Be very specific.

What will you read? Why?

What case studies will you do? How will you select the participants?

What historical monuments will you examine? How? Why?

Quote from feedback a former student received on her proposal for a grant to study displaced population in Lebanon:

“Expand on your methodology. As currently worded – ‘will cast light on; will look into; will explore’ – your methodological approach to the case studies is rather vague. Please state more explicitly how you will conduct the case studies and how you will select the

samples of people to interview; for example, will you interview the residents in every 5th house?"

VI. Why does my project matter? How will it add to the existing body of knowledge? Will it help anyone? Will it suggest further research?