

Creating an Action Plan

Deadlines are part of life. Completing projects on time is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. So, how can you avoid having to rush through all the stages of your research project at the last minute? One way is to use a strategy called backward planning: develop a formal action plan, and create a timeline based on this action plan.

A major research project must successfully pass through several stages. On the next page is an outline for an action plan, with a list of these stages. Completing this action plan will help you organize your time and give you goals and deadlines you can manage. The times that are suggested for each stage are only a guide, with one day equivalent to any regular day in your life. Adjust the time you will spend on each stage to match the scope of your project. For example, a project based on primary data (data that you collect) will usually require more time than a project based on secondary data (data that other people have collected and published). You will also need to consider your personal situation—the issues that are affecting you and may interfere with completion of the project.

Issues Affecting Project Completion

Consider the issues that may interfere with completion of the project in a time-efficient manner. For example:

- part-time job
- after-school sports and activities
- regular homework
- assignments for other courses
- tests in other courses
- driving school
- time you spend with friends
- school dances and parties
- family commitments
- access to research sources and technology



What other issues can you add to this list?

Your Turn

- A.** Take some time to complete an action plan for your project. Start by deciding on the probable length of time for each stage. Do not forget to include buffer space in your action plan. Buffer space is not a stage, but it is important. If something goes wrong (for example, if you are unable to gather appropriate data for your topic and must select a new topic), having that buffer space in your action plan may allow you to finish your project on time, without making extraordinary efforts.



1. Select the topic you would like to explore.

Suggested time: 1 to 3 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

2. Create the research question that you would like to answer.

Suggested time: 1 to 3 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

3. Collect the data.

Suggested time: 5 to 10 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

Buffer space

Suggested time: 3 to 7 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

4. Analyze the data.

Suggested time: 5 to 10 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

- B.** Use a calendar and your probable times for each stage to work backwards from the presentation date to create a schedule you can follow. This will ensure that you will be able to complete all the stages of your project in the time available. In your schedule, include regular conferences with your teacher (5 to 10 min) to discuss your progress.

5. Create an outline for your presentation.

Suggested time: 2 to 4 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

6. Prepare a first draft.

Suggested time: 3 to 10 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

7. Revise, edit, and proofread.

Suggested time: 3 to 5 days

Your probable time:

Finish date:

8. Prepare and practise your presentation.

Suggested time: 3 to 5 days

Your probable time:

Finish date: