

Carrying Out Your Research

As you continue with your project, you will need to conduct research and collect data. The strategies that follow will help you collect data.

Considering the Type of Data You Need

Both primary data and secondary data have their pros and cons. Primary data provides specific information about your research question or statement, but may take time to collect and process. Secondary data is usually easier to obtain and can be analyzed in less time. However, because the data was gathered for other purposes, you may need to sift through the data to find what you are looking for.

The type of data you choose can depend on many factors, including the research question, your skills, and available time and resources.

Assessing the Reliability of Sources

When collecting primary data, you must ensure the following:

- For surveys, the sample size must be reasonably large and the random sampling technique must be well designed.
- For surveys or interviews, the questionnaires must be designed to avoid bias.
- For experiments or studies, the data must be free from measurement bias.
- The data must be compiled accurately.

When obtaining secondary data, you must ensure that the source of your data is reliable.

- If the data is from a report, determine what the authors' credentials are, how up-to-date the data is, and whether other researchers have cited the same data.
- Be aware that data collection is often funded by an organization with an interest in the outcome or with an agenda that it is trying to further. Knowing which organization has funded the data collection may help you decide how reliable the data is.

Accessing Resources

Your school or community librarian can help you locate relevant sources, as can the librarians of local community colleges or universities. Other people, such as teachers, your parents or guardians, local professionals, and Elders may also have valuable input. (Be sure to respect local community protocols when seeking involvement of Elders or Knowledge Keepers.) Make a list of people who might be able to help you obtain the information you need, and then identify how you might contact each person on your list.