Title of paper

Author name

Institution

Instructions

This document serves two purposes. Firstly, it is a template for the **Method** section. If you use this document to create your Method section without changing the formatting or deleting section headers, you should have a correctly formatted Method section. You will obviously need to replace much of the text here with your own writing, but leave the section headers untouched and follow the directions and you should be good to go.

Secondly, the text within the body of this document offers advice and suggestions on what to write within each section. They are intended to help you make sure that the appropriate material appears in the appropriate sections. This is text that must be replaced by your own writing, but you should find it helpful.

A final bit of advice: the Method section is like a recipe’s instructions. A recipe lists the ingredients needed very precisely and comments on possible variations (if one is at high altitudes, cooking time may be longer, etc). Similarly, the *Participants, Materials, Measures*, and *Ethical Considerations* sections list the ingredients and important issues for the research study very precisely. A recipe will also give the step-by-step process of how to create the dish, just as the *Procedure* gives step-by-step instructions on how to do the research.

This instruction page should be deleted entirely. .

Method

**Participants**

Begin this section by talking about the population of people that will be needed for this study. Indicate anything necessary to permit the reader to know what sort of person is needed: do they have a disorder? Does it have a specific severity or range of severities? Is there an age range? Are factors such as gender, race, first language or others important or controlled?

Will there be any screening done, such as a questionnaire or a performance test? Will the results of these determine whether a potential participant is eligible to take part? Will these results determine which level of the predictor variable that the participant falls into? For example, if the person has an autism spectrum disorder, an assessment might be made to determine the severity of the disorder in order to classify them as mild, moderate, or severe for the purposes of the research study.

How will the participants be recruited? One can’t simply say: “They will be randomly selected.” One needs to indicate how this will be done. Will people be approached on the street? Will the researcher approach a clinic or school or other facility where member of this population would be more common? Will the researcher ask for referrals from professionals or hang posters with an email address or telephone number?

**Materials**

Will any commercially available assessment instruments be used (such as the MMPI-2, the Rorschach, the WAIS, Beck’s Depression Inventory, etc.)? Each that will be used should be identified and briefly described, including an explanation for why it was chosen. A strong reliability or validity for assessing the issue being researched would be an excellent reason, but be sure to give specifics. “The WAIS was selected because it has high reliability and validity,” tells the reader nothing. Be specific and use references. “According to Blithe and Nelseon (2009), the reliability of the WAIS for aiding in the evaluation of cognitive functioning is 0.86. Due to the high reliability and previous use of the assessment for similar research, the WAIS was selected…”

If an assessment is to be custom made for the research, some detail will be needed here. Why are no commercial assessments to be used? What sort of questions will be asked (give one or two specific examples of questions relevant to the research topic)? How will the assessment be checked for validity and reliability? Finally, provide language indicating that the full text of the assessment is provided in an appendix of the proposal. Students do not have to actually make the assessment and appendix, but indicating the awareness that inclusion of the custom-designed assessment is necessary would be a good idea.

What other materials might be needed? Photographs? Are computers or other electronic devices for performing or analyzing the research needed? A specialized application on a computer or tablet? Is a special setting (therapy room, play room, etc.) needed and, if so, what sort of contents should it have? Are tokens to be used? If so, what form will they take? Anything that is not a basic office supply item should be mentioned

**Procedure**

In this section students must outline very specifically how the research will be done. First: will the researchers or assistants require specialized training? For example, if one is doing an observational study in which one wishes the observer to track the number of times and severity of specific behaviors, the observers need to be trained to recognize the specific target behavior and to assess severity. One will want to train the observers so that the observer inter-reliability is very high…that is, if two observers see the same behavior they both recognize it and rate it as essentially the same severity.

Recruitment is discussed in the Participants section, which may include information on the groupings they are in based upon the predictor/independent variable. However, this subsection gives more details the specific groups that they will be placed into or have been categorized into. The treatment that each group gets must be outlined carefully so that the reader knows exactly what will be done with the participants. Obviously one cannot predict every eventuality, but attempting to predict the more likely possibilities is a good thing to do.

Clearly indicate how the dependent (criterion) variable data will be collected. Will observers be in the room with the participant? When are the pretest and post-test done? How many reaction time measurements will be made? Etc.

Also discuss how debriefing will occur and what, if any, deceptions will need to be discussed. Debriefing and deception also needs to be discussed in the Ethical Considerations section, but they are part of the procedure and should be touched upon here.

This section tends to be the lengthiest section because one MUST give a very clear picture of exactly what will be done. If this section is ambiguous, it is unlikely that the proposal would be approved.

**Measures**

Identify your independent (or predictor) variable(s) here. What is the variable name and what are the levels of the variable? Is it something that needs to be measured? If so, how is it measured? Examples could include drug dosage, severity of depressive symptoms, functional level of language skills, etc.

Identify your dependent (or criterion) variable(s) here. What is the variable name and how is it measured? Examples could include reduction in anxiety symptoms, frequency of suicidal ideation, degree of success in using a symbolic communication system, etc.

Each variable should be discussed thoroughly and each should be in its own paragraph to enhance clarity for the reader.

How will the reliability and validity of these variables be assessed? This generally applies to things that must be measured.

The *Measures* section could be placed ahead of the *Procedure* section if one’s presentation would make that more logical, but if you want to be safe, just leave it here.

**Ethical Considerations**

Discuss several ethical issues here; each should get its own paragraph. Of course one should speak to the need for confidentiality and privacy and how those will be maintained. One also needs to discuss the concept of informed consent, the voluntary nature of research and the fact that the participants may withdraw at any time without coercion. Debriefing should also be discussed.

If any deception has occurred, discuss why it was necessary and whether it might produce problems for the participants. If it might produce problems but still needs to be done, what will be done to mitigate these problems?

If the participants have a special, protected status (children, disordered, incarcerated, etc.) one needs to discuss additional steps taken to ensure the safety and rights of the participants.

Referencing specific standards from the Ethics Code would be an example of best practices in covering this issue.

References

Author1, A.B., Author2, C.D., & Author3, E.F. (DATE). Article title. *Journal title, volume #,* page numbers. DOI (if available)

Author4, G.H. (DATE). *Book title.* Place of publication: Publisher.

Bordens, K.S., & Abbott, B.B (2013). *Research design and methods: A process approach, 9th Ed.* New York, NY: McGraw Hill

(The first two are templates for APA formatted references for a journal article and a book. The last is an example of the textbook’s appropriate reference. Please take note of the italicization and capitalization. Delete this comment)

**Assignment: Research Proposal – Draft of Method Section**