

Tips: What is Methodology?

Methodology is a series of choices:

1. Choices about what information and data to gather
2. Choices about how to analyze the information and data that you gather
3. Other methodological choices

1. What Information Do I Gather?

The answer resides in your research question –if your question is clear, you will **KNOW** what to gather.

To ensure that your research question(s) is clear, the **TERMS** in your question(s) must be clearly defined:

Terms need an “**Operational Definition**” – “*a definition which describes the operations required to collect information about the concept or term.*”

Example:

- Research Topic: European Political Elites and the Changing Trends of Nationalism in the EU:
Operational Definitions Needed:
 - “Elite”: Who are they? What makes an elite?
 - “Nationalism”: In this context, what does the author mean by nationalism?

2. How Do I Analyze the Information that I Gather?

Analysis separates a research project from a term paper.

The nature of your question determines the method of analysis

- Descriptive questions call for descriptive methods
- Correlational questions call for you to make correlations
- Theoretical evaluation calls for the evaluation of the entire theory
- Cost-Benefit analysis of policies calls for you to find a method to conduct a cost/benefit analysis

3. What Are the Other Methodological Choices?

Think about practical and intellectual considerations when deciding which methodologies to employ.

For example: cost, time, resources, accessibility

Qualitative vs. Quantitative:

- Even if description is qualitative, it still needs to be precise
- Your question determines the choice between these two approaches

Inductive vs. Deductive