**What Do I Need to Know About Time and Timetabling?**

As you start to write your research timetable, the reality of what you’ve taken on may start to seem very daunting. Remember that organizing a timetable is essential to keep control of your project.

You may also feel keen to get on with the “real” research, and wonder how necessary it is to take time over the preliminaries. But if you’ve ever rushed into writing an exam paper without reading the questions thoroughly—or started painting your bedroom without preparing the surfaces—you’ll know that time spent doing the basics will pay off later!

Your timetable should be organized in blocks, each of which represents a task. It’s not possible to allocate a specific time to each of these. As a rough guide**, preliminaries** will take up between one-fifth and one-third of the time you have available for the whole research project. **Research**requires between a third and a half of your total allocated time. You should allow at least a fifth of your overall time to **writing up**.

**These tasks need not be done separately one after the other: Some of the blocks will overlap.**

1. **Firming up your research proposal**

You need to firm up your original proposal into a clear specification of what you’re going to do. This is not only a useful guideline now, but will serve as the first draft of the introduction to your dissertation.

2. **Conducting a literature search and literature review**

You need to find and read the research that other people have done on your topic. Then write this up as a literature review.

3. **Arranging access**

a. **Documents and data**: You need to gain access to paperwork—documents and secondary data—and arrange interviews with key informants.

b. **Ethical consent and certification**: Obtaining ethical consent may be straightforward—possibly involving your supervisor signing off on your ethics statement. But if you have to get permission from an official body, it can be much more complicated. Make sure you know what sort of ethics approval you need and how to get it. If your research involves children or vulnerable people, you will need a certificate testifying to your suitability for working with them. This is usually a simple police check, but it may take some time.

4. **Writing up your methods section**

You’ll be required to write up a methods section in your dissertation or thesis. You should say at this point what methods you intend to use. Then later, you’ll have to come back to this section to say what you actually did.

5. **Carrying out the research**

This is the most important part of the exercise, and you need to allocate the most time for it. How you break this time up depends on the style of research you’re doing. Getting your research materials is vital.

6. **Analyzing and interpretation**

As you do your research, you will begin to analyze and interpret your findings. But you should also allocate time after you’ve finished your research to make sense of it as a whole.

7. **Writing up and editing**

It’s important that you write up your research in draft form as you go along. Anything you write down is “money in the bank” toward your final document. At the end you have to draw the whole thing together and write and edit your final document to a specified length.

* **Blocks can overlap**. For example, you can—and probably should—arrange certification at the same time as doing a literature search. You will certainly be analyzing as you’re doing your research.
* **You must have an ultimate deadline**. Things may slip a bit but you should build some slack into your timetable so you will meet your latest date for submission.
* **Have someone else check on your progress**. Give your timetable to a supervisor or friend who can ask where you are in your overall plan, and help you catch up if you’re behind.

This content is reprinted with permission of SAGE Publishing’s:

Project Planner

<http://methods.sagepub.com/project-planner>

Project Planner is a product of:

