Apply

# Exercise 4.1

Take a research topic that interests you. Now consider the ways in which access to situations or informants might be a problem. Then examine how you might redefine your research topic to remove the problem of access.

# Exercise 4.2

Draw a flow chart of no more than one page setting out your key concepts and how they relate.

# Exercise 4.3

Review your area of research interest in terms of the following questions and formulate your research problem in terms of one kind of puzzle:

How or why did X develop? (A developmental puzzle)

How does X work? (A mechanical puzzle)

What causes X or what influence does X have on Y? (A causal puzzle) (Mason, 1996: 14)

# Exercise 4.4

Take a research topic that interests you. Then reformulate it as:

a ‘what’ question

a ‘how’ question

a ‘why’ question.

# Exercise 4.5

Howard Becker is the author of a very useful book for research students called *Tricks of the Trade* (1998). One trick he mentions suggests the following exercise:

1. Ask your supervisor (or a fellow student who knows your work reasonably well) to offer a snap characterization of what you are trying to find out.

2. Now respond to this characterization of your work (e.g., by denying it or modifying it).

This exercise, says Becker, should help you to get a better understanding of what you are trying to do.

## Suggested Answers for Exercise 4.1

 Take a research topic that interests you.

Answer: One example might be ‘how top managers view their organization’

 Now consider the ways in which access to situations or informants might be a problem.

Answer: The managers don’t want to talk to you

 Then examine how you might redefine your research topic to remove the problem of access.

Answer: How the organization presents itself in its publicly available annual reports