

Historical Research

Historical research or historiography, "attempts to systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present". (Berg & Lure, 2012, p. 305)

Historical research relies on a wide variety of sources, both primary & secondary including unpublished material.

Primary Sources

- Eyewitness accounts of events
- Can be oral or written testimony
- Found in public records & legal documents, minutes of meetings, corporate records, recordings, letters, diaries, journals, drawings.
- Located in university archives, libraries or privately run collections such as local historical society.

Secondary Sources

- Can be oral or written
- Secondhand accounts of events
- Found in textbooks, encyclopedias, journal articles, newspapers, biographies and other media such as films or tape recordings.

When to Use the Historical Research Method?

You can use historical research method to

- Uncover the unknown fact
- Answer questions
- Identify the association between the past and present.
- Understand the culture based on past experiences.
- Record and evaluate the contributions of individuals, organisations, and institutes.

How to Conduct Historical Research?

Step 1 – Select the Research Topic

- Consider your previous study as your previous knowledge and data can make your research enjoyable and comfortable for you.
- List your interests and focus on the current events to find a promising question.
- Take notes of regular activities and consider your personal experiences on a specific topic.

- Develop a question using your [research topic](#).
- Explore your research question by asking yourself when? Why? How

Step 2- Collect the Data

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Records | ● Constitutions | ● Wills |
| ● Government documents | ● Court-decisions | ● Declarations |
| ● Images | ● Diaries | ● Licences |
| ● autobiographies | ● Audios | ● Reports |
| ● letters | ● Videos | |
| | | |
| ● Fossils | | ● Language literature |
| ● Tools | | ● Artefacts |
| ● Weapons | | ● Abandoned places |
| ● Household articles | | ● Monuments |
| ● Clothes or any belonging of humans | | |

Secondary Sources

Sometimes it's impossible to access primary sources, and researchers rely on secondary sources to obtain information for their research.

It includes:

- Newspapers
- Publications
- Periodicals
- Encyclopaedia
- books

Step 3 – Analyse the Data

After collecting the information, you need to analyse it. You can use [data analysis methods](#) like

- [Thematic analysis](#)
- Coding system
- Theoretical model (Researchers use multiple theories to explain a specific phenomenon, situations, and behaviour types)
- Quantitative data to validate

Step 4 – Criticism of Data

External Criticism:

It aims at identifying the external features of the data such as signature, handwriting, language, nature, spelling, etc., of the documents. It also involves the physical and chemical tests of paper, paint, ink, metal cloth, or any collected object.

Internal Criticism:

It aims at identifying the meaning and reliability of the data. It focuses on the errors, printing, translation, omission, additions in the documents. The researchers should use both external and internal criticism to ensure the validity of the data.

Step 5 – Present Your Findings

While presenting the [findings of your research](#), you need to ensure that you have met the objectives of your research or not. Historical material can be organized based on the theme and topic, and it's known as thematic and topical arrangement.

There are some tips to follow

Build Arguments and Narrative

Your research aims not just to collect information as these are the raw materials of research. You need to build a strong argument and narrate the details of past events or incidents based on your findings.

Organise your Argument

You can review the literature and other researchers' contributions to the topic you've chosen to enhance your thinking and argument.

Proofread, Revise and Edit

After putting your findings on a paper, you need to proofread it to weed out the errors, rewrite it to [improve, and edit it thoroughly before submitting it](#).

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Tips to Collect Data

In this world of technology, many people rely on Google to find out any information. All you have to do is enter a few keywords and sit back. You'll find several relevant results on screen. It's an effective and quick way of gathering information. Sometimes historical documents are not accessible to everyone online, and you need to visit traditional libraries to find historical treasures. It will help you explore your knowledge along with data collection.

You can visit historical places, conduct interviews, review literature, and access [primary and secondary](#) data sources such as books, newspapers, publications, documents, etc. You can take notes while collecting the information as it helps to organise the data accurately.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Historical Research

Advantages	Disadvantages
● It is easy to calculate and understand the obtained information. ● It is applied to various time periods based on industry custom. ● It helps in understanding current educational practices, theories, and problems based on past experiences. ● It helps in determining when and how a specific incident exactly happened in the past.	● A researcher cannot control or manipulate the variables. ● It's time-consuming ● Researchers cannot affect past incidents. ● Historical Researchers need to rely on the available data most excessively on secondary data. ● Researchers cannot conduct surveys and experiments in the past.

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