

Proposal Writing

What is a proposal?

A plan or suggestion put forward for consideration or discussion by others.

Why writes a proposal?

To persuade people with money to invest in your new company.

Because you have ideas to do something but no money, or

Because you don't *want* to use your money.

To persuade your boss of your suggestions or ideas.

To get him to authorize buying a new software, equipment, furniture, etc.

To suggest your idea for a new app or product line.

To persuade some organizations to fund your research.

Researching needs money.

But why write a proposal for senior project?

Mainly to get you to practice writing one.

Therefore, *write your proposal as if you have to convince us to let you do your project.*

Your score will depend on how well you convince us (although we will approve your project anyway).

Also, you will begin to learn and think more about your project as you write it.

It will help give you a good start on your project.

Two important things you *need* to show in your proposal

1. That your proposed idea is worth the investment, and
2. That you know how to make it happen.

The readers (your boss, potential investors, grant committees) mainly look for these two things.

You need to convince them that they should fund/approve your idea!

Showing that your idea is worth the money

Why is this project important?

Any competition?

Why is this project important?

Finding investors:

What does your proposed product/service do? Why would someone buy/pay for it?

Will it interest a large number of people? Why?

How much will someone be willing to pay for it? Will the profit margin be high enough?

Proposing to buy a new software:

How will it improve the productivity of your team/company?

Will it give the company an edge over the competitors?

Will it reduce cost? Enough to be worth the buying price?

Grant proposal (research):

Will it lead to new knowledge?

Will the new knowledge benefit mankind? Benefit the country?

Any competition?

Anyone else is doing it?

Will you finish before them? Will yours be better than theirs?

Anyone else is planning to do it?

Anyone else *did* it?

If yes, is their work exactly like yours? Somewhat similar?

If not exactly the same, is yours going to be better? At least better in some way?

Can you really do it?

Do you have sufficient technical background?

Proposing to find a cure for cancer without any degrees in medicine or biology is probably not a good idea.

Or proposing to write a new iPhone app, but do not know what an iPhone looks like.

Do you have concrete plans on how to go about implementing your idea?

How many employees will you need? What are their responsibilities?

Where to secure all of the required materials?

How do you plan to sell your product after it is finished?

For research, have you planned all of your experiments?

Well thought-out plans and sufficient background make the reader more confident to give you their money.

Other Tips for Writing Proposals

State what you propose clearly at the beginning.

Do not wait till the end to state what you are asking for.

Readers may not bother to read till the end!

Write in a way that people with different background can understand.

Your proposal may be read by both experts and non-experts (e.g. managers).

E.g. avoid using technical jargons if possible.

Similarly, give enough background information (for the readers who may need them).

Do not assume that readers will believe everything you write! *Convince them.*

May need to cite some references to back up your claim.

E.g. if you want to claim that many people do not like Google Maps and you want to propose a better one, you need to cite where you get this information (a survey, for example).

Don't just say: "I want to make a fortune teller program because I think it is very interesting" without explaining why it is interesting.

Lots of previous-year students write like this!

Don't just explain why you are interested in the project. Explain why **the readers** should be interested in it.

Don't write (in essence): "I want you to give me money to open a company selling clothes for geckos because I like geckos since I was young."

Perhaps showing that there are many other people who want to dress up their geckos and they would be willing to pay lots of money for them is a better way.

Writing References

Last section in your proposal is References, which lists the documents you get the information you use in your proposal from.

There are many acceptable styles for writing references. One of the commonly-used styles for scientific writing is the following:

- [1] T. Back. *Evolutionary algorithms in theory and practice: evolution strategies, evolutionary programming, genetic algorithms*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1996.
- [2] R. Hooke and T. A. Jeeves. Direct search solution of numerical and statistical problems. *J. ACM*, 8(2):212-229, April 1961.

Citing a reference

When you write something that comes from a reference, write like this:

...The tool path can be modified so that it avoids the stationary positions [1].

However, ...

Do not just copy and paste the sentences or paragraphs from a website or a book! This is not OK even if you cite it!

Read and understand the information from the website/book, close it, then write in your own words.

Think of it like this: when someone tells you a story, and then you retell that story to another person, you normally don't use the exact same sentences the first person used.

Writing

In formal writing, avoid using apostrophes to shorten not, is, am, are, will, etc.

Don't write: aren't, isn't, I'll, can't, ...

Write: are not, is not, I will, cannot, ...

Passive voice or active voice? Does not matter much in proposal writing.

Use consistent format throughout your proposal.

Ex: there are two acceptable ways to start a new paragraph.

First type of paragraphs

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence and rationale that were stated at the beginning of the paragraph. This explanation shows readers why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

Continue the pattern of giving examples and explaining them until all points/examples that the writer deems necessary have been made and explained.

Second type of paragraphs

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence and rationale that were stated at the beginning of the paragraph. This explanation shows readers why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

Continue the pattern of giving examples and explaining them until all points/examples that the writer deems necessary have been made and explained.

Use consistent headings, too.

Ex: if you start the first section with a number (e.g. “1 Introduction”), do so for all sections and subsections.

So if you have a subsection in Section 1, it will be “1.1 Motivation”, and so on.

If having subsubsection, it will be “1.1.1 Thai people”...

By the way, the above is the format the template uses.