



checklist

Think about research ethics *from the start* – when you begin to plan your research topic – as this will save you time and problems later on.

Planning

- Make ethics part of your literature review and the development of your methodology. Are any ethical issues raised by the question you are trying to answer? How have ethical considerations been addressed by other researchers?
- Find the research ethics codes that are most relevant to your planned research; this could include the code for your discipline and/or for the requirements of your funder. How do the principles and guidance apply to the specific context of your research?
 - think about the whole of the research process, from sampling to seeking consent, to data collection, analysis and reporting.
 - work out in detail what might be the potential risks and benefits in what you plan to do. What groups or individuals could be put at risk and what kind of harm could they face? How can you minimise the risk of harm?

Applying for ethics approval

- Do you need to get formal ethics approval for your research, for example from a research ethics committee or a research supervisor in your organisation, or from an external committee? If so, make sure you build in enough time:
 - to prepare a thorough application and discuss it with an experienced colleague or supervisor
 - for the review itself
 - in case the ethics committee requires a second stage of review, once you have provided additional information or made any required changes to your plans.
- When making your application for ethics approval, provide as much detail as you can. When research ethics committees do *not* give approval straight away, it is often because they do not have enough information to make a proper assessment, and this can delay your research.

While conducting your research

- As you work through every stage of your research project, keep your ethics application as a 'living document' – to guide you in dealing with ethics dilemmas as they arise.
 - Make sure you keep discussing ethics considerations with a supervisor or an experienced colleague – and that you talk to them (or go back to the research ethics committee) about any ethics dilemmas that might arise.
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project

This chapter centres on two essential arguments. First, you will be a better social researcher if you make ethics part of your mindset, embedded in everything that you do, and not merely a bureaucratic obstacle to your research. Second, the process of ethics review should support your reflections – helping you to think more deeply about the ethics considerations in your study. This project is designed to help you think about ethics in research that you read and to think about how you put research ethics into practice:

- First, choose a journal article that is relevant to your theoretical discipline and area of study, and read it carefully, thinking about the ethics considerations involved. The article could be something taken from your literature review or from a course reading list – it's up to you – but make sure it involves primary research (quantitative or qualitative) with people.
 - Next, find the research ethics application form, and related guidance, for your institution. If you are not based in an organisation that has a research ethics review system, use the example form and guidance provided in the ESRC *Framework for Research Ethics* at: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/.
 - Working in a group or individually, and using the form and guidance, prepare an ethics application based on the study described in the journal article. You might need to make up some of the details and to produce supporting materials such as an information sheet or consent form.
 - When you have completed your ethics application, swap it with another group or student. Now it is your turn to act as the ethics reviewer – read their application and supporting documentation. Are you happy to issue an approval for the research to go ahead? Would you require any changes or ask for more information?
 - After you have both completed your reviews, give each other feedback and discuss any revisions that are required. If you have time, repeat the process until you have your ethics approval. What have you learned along the way?
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