

# How to align the elements of your dissertation proposal

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# Contents

- [What is alignment?](#)
- [What needs aligning?](#)
- [The elements of your dissertation proposal](#)
- [Why do you need alignment in your proposal?](#)
- [Get your proposal approved](#)
- [A testimonial](#)
- [About Carol M. Booton, Ph.D.](#)

# What is alignment?

- Alignment refers to the logical progression of ideas between the structural elements of your dissertation proposal.

# What needs aligning?

- When your Chair or Committee talks about your proposal's lack of “alignment,” they are referring to the logical progression from the **Introduction**, to the **Problem Statement**, to the **Purpose Statement**, to the **Research Questions** and **Hypotheses** (if applicable), and finally to the **Methodology**.

# The elements of your dissertation proposal

## 1. INTRODUCTION

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

## 3. PURPOSE STATEMENT

## 4. METHODOLOGY

## 5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS & 6. HYPOTHESES

The **introduction** sets the stage for your study. In broad statements, introduce the topic to your reader. Define key terms. After reading the introduction, the problem should start to be apparent. Start with ten or twelve sentences supported with strong peer-reviewed sources.

The **problem statement** flows from the introduction. Clearly state only one problem. Start with five supported sentences. Be clear: “The problem is that...”

After reading the problem statement, the logical question is, so what should we do about it? The **purpose statement** is the logical answer. Be clear: “The purpose of this study is to...”

This is the “how” of your study. Choose the **methodology** that will best help you answer your research questions (your choices are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).

The **research questions** are your roadmap. Be clear: “The following research questions will guide the study:” The research questions logically follow from the problem and the purpose. Use the same terminology.

**Hypotheses** are your research questions operationalized into null and alternative statements. (If you are doing a qualitative study, you won't have hypotheses.)

# Why do you need alignment?

- Lack of alignment between dissertation elements is possibly the most common reason a dissertation proposal fails to receive approval.

# Get your proposal approved

- **Love your dissertation... or not—but get it done!**
- **Visit [loveyourdissertation.com](https://loveyourdissertation.com)**
  - Free alignment examples
  - Free customizable worksheets (Word)
  - Detailed guidance on how to align your dissertation proposal elements
  - Comprehensive review of your proposal
  - Editing
  - Coaching support

# Testimonial

“ I really appreciate you hanging in there with me and helping me through this process. I know for a fact without you I probably would have stopped, because I was just getting so tired after 8 years. Thank you for being there for me, with all of my heart, thank you!!!

—L.G., Atlanta, GA



# About Carol M. Booton, Ph.D.



- Carol Booton provides dissertation tips, tools, and support to help doctoral candidates achieve their academic dream of earning a Ph.D.
- Carol is a market researcher, editor, trainer, and coach based in Portland, Oregon.
- Carol has helped many graduate students resolve the alignment problems in their doctoral dissertation and Master's thesis proposals.