**What is a problem statement ?**

The first and most important step in any research is to identify and delineate the research problem: that is, what the researcher wants to solve and what questions he/she wishes to answer.

In academic research, writing a problem statement can help you contextualize and understand the significance of your research problem. A problem statement can be several paragraphs long and serve as the basis for your [research proposal](https://www.scribbr.com/research-process/research-proposal/), or it can be condensed into just a few sentences in the [introduction](https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/introduction-structure/) of your paper or thesis.

A **statement of the problem** is used in research work as a claim that outlines the problem addressed by a study. The statement of the problem briefly addresses the question: **What is the problem that the research will address**?

Writing a statement of the problem should help you clearly **identify the purpose of the research project** you will propose.

**What is the format for writing a statement of the problem?**

A persuasive statement of problem is usually written in three parts ( statements) :

**Statement1:** description of the ideal scenario or introduction

It describes the desired state or situation; it explains how things should be

**Statement2 :** issue statement ( describing and explaining the problem) :

Write an issue statement that describes the problem and why the problem is important.

**Statement3:** ( the consequences/ the goal/ the method)

Using specific details, show how the situation in statement 2 contains little promise of improvement unless something is done. Then emphasize the benefits of research by projecting the consequences of possible solutions as well. Or write out the method that you plan to follow to solve the problem, it is through your method that you convey the steps that you will take in solving the problem.

**Note : in some situations, the ideal scenario does not exist, thus the researcher directly start his or her statement of the problem with the description of the problem.**

**How to get started:**

**The 5 Ws**- who- what- where- when- and why- is a great too that helps get pertinent information out for discussion.

**Who:** who does the problem affect? Identify Specific groups, organizations, customers ….

**What:** what is the issue? What is the impact of the issue? What will happen if the issue is fixed? What would happen if we didn’t solve the problem?

**When:** when does the issue occur? When does it need to be fixed?

**Where:** where is the issue occuring?

**Why:** why is it important that we fix the problem?

**Example :**

Statement1: in order to help individuals learn to deal with grief after a major loss has occurred in their life, the Rainbows program in Hills High School aims to provide each student in the program an environment in which they feel safe, comfortable, and normal. The goal of the RAINBOWS is to help students learn, understand, deal with, and move on from their loss**.( introduction )**

Statement 2: However, often, students do not know other students in the weekly group meeting very well, which causes them to be uncomfortable and hesitant about speaking. In the presence of their peers, a students does not feel safe about speaking or expressing their feelings in fear that they may be judged**.( the issue statement: description and explanation of the problem)**

Statement3: by not feeling comfortable or safe in the program, students are not able to fully learn, understand and deal with their loss**.( consequences of the problem; what will happen if we don’t solve the problem)**

**Exercise one :**

Read the following problem statements, then break them into three parts by identifying each one.

***Example 1:***

Today’s generation of average and below average school children enjoy a total availability of learning and teaching means, materials, and resources, which make learning easier, more effective, and allow learners to have a better education. However, there is a lack of interest for studying among school children; they make less efforts to build up their study skills such as reading and writing. If some hours were devoted to doing extra activities, the whole population might be better educated. Since studying is one of the tools that help children become more independent , parents and community leaders need to be convinced of the importance of guiding and encouraging their children to spend more hours with their peers studying.

***Example 2:***

The national curriculum for teaching and learning English as a foreign language encourages learners to work on their reading skills to produce a generation capable of making decisions and solving problems, to achieve this goal many schools have been equipped with libraries as space for reading where Pupils can spend their free time reading their favorite books, short stories or even novels. However , it has been noticed by school teachers and library staff that there is a lack of interest in reading as many students do not use the library, many teachers agree that the parents are the first responsible for this issue since they allow their children to have unlimited access to their gadgets that eventually lead children to become less serious about their studies, a successful way to reintegrate children into school library might be by raising the awareness of parents and community leaders towards the hazards of the inappropriate use of gadgets.

***Example 3:***

One of the objectives of teaching and learning English is to build a good English pronunciation because the aim of the majority of learners is to become proficient speakers; or being able to produce accurate and fluent utterances. Despite the different strategies that have been used to promote students’ fluent production of the target language, some still face difficulties in developing their pronunciation particularly the pronunciation of the final “d” sound and “s” sound. To investigate the factors being responsible of this problem, the study attempts to analyze the students’ ideas and thoughts about the development of speaking accuracy.

**Exercise two:**

Write a problem statement about one of the following topics, then give it a title.

Food quality at the university

Medical service in your country

Collective sports

Pollution ( choose a particular type to make it specific)

Violence ( choose a particular type to make it specific)

**Note :** in writing a problem statement about the suggested topics, you have first to make sure that the topic is specific, if not , narrow it down, then add another variable to deal with ( two variables should be dealt with and included in your title)

The title as discussed in previous sessions should include three important points:

1/ the aim ( investigating the relationship, exploring the difference, investigating the effect or impact…..)

2/ the variables ( independent and dependent variables)

3/ the target population of your research ( sample)

**Example:** investigating the impact of using cognitive reading strategies in developing graduate students’ vocabulary.

The aim: investigating the impact

Variables: cognitive reading strategies ( IV) / vocabulary ( DV)

The target population: graduate students