

### Quick Study Guide

**Topic:** Research in Psychology - Methods

**Related Course(s):** Psych 1100, 2800, 3000, 3200

### Psychological Research

(definition) Research is a systematic inquiry aimed at the discovery of new knowledge and is a central ingredient of the scientific method in psychology. It provides the key to understanding the degree to which hypotheses (and the theories) are accurate.

### Types of Research

**Descriptive Research:** Descriptive research is designed to systematically investigate a person, group, or patterns of behavior. These methods include archival research, naturalistic observation, survey research, and case studies.

**Archival Research:** In archival research, *existing data*, such as census documents, college records, and newspaper articles, are examined to test a hypothesis.

**Benefit(s):** relatively inexpensive means of testing a hypothesis because someone else has already collected the basic data.

**Drawback(s):** The use of existing data has several drawbacks. The data may not be in a form that allows the researcher to test a hypothesis fully. The information could be incomplete, or it could have been collected haphazardly.

**Naturalistic Observation:** In naturalistic observation, the investigator *observes some naturally occurring behavior* and does not make a change in the situation.

**Benefit(s):** the advantage of naturalistic observation is obvious - we get a sample of what people do in their “natural habitat”

**Drawback(s):** the inability to control any of the factors of interest.

**Survey Research:** In survey research, a sample of people chosen to represent a larger group of interest (a population) is asked a series of questions about their behavior, thoughts, or attitudes.

**Benefit(s):** Survey methods have become so sophisticated that even with a very small sample researchers are able to infer with great accuracy how a population (est.) behaves. (lit.)