

## Describing research methods

### A Useful word combinations

We may carry out a procedure or an experiment or a pilot study. [preliminary study]  
 We use or, more formally, employ a method or a technique or an approach or an instrument or a device. [an object or method used for a special purpose] You can also use or employ any particular type of research methodology.  
 Apparatus [equipment for a lab experiment] is assembled and checked. *Apparatus* is an uncountable noun but you can talk about a piece of apparatus.

### B Types of research method

research method	what the researcher does	limitation of method
experimental study	manipulates <sup>1</sup> a variable [anything that can vary] under highly controlled conditions to see if this produces [causes] any changes in a second [dependent] variable	done in the highly controlled setting of the laboratory – these conditions are artificial <sup>2</sup> and may not reflect what happens in the infinitely more complex real world; other researchers often try to replicate <sup>3</sup> successful experiments
correlational study	attempts to determine the relationship between two or more variables, using mathematical techniques for summarising data	only shows that two variables are related in a systematic way, but does not prove or disprove <sup>4</sup> that the relationship is a cause-and-effect relationship
naturalistic (empirical) observation (also known as field study)	observes and records some behaviour or phenomenon <sup>5</sup> , often over a prolonged period, in its natural setting without interfering with <sup>6</sup> the subjects or phenomena in any way	can be very time-consuming as researcher may have to wait for some time to observe the behaviour or phenomenon of interest; difficult to observe behaviour without disrupting <sup>7</sup> it
survey	makes inferences from <sup>8</sup> data collected via interviews or questionnaires	intentional deception, poor memory, or misunderstanding of the question can all contribute to inaccuracies in the data
case study	keeps in-depth <sup>9</sup> descriptive records, as an outside observer, of an individual or group	often involves only a single individual as the subject of the study and this person may not be representative <sup>10</sup> of the general group or population

<sup>1</sup> makes changes to <sup>2</sup> not natural <sup>3</sup> do in exactly the same way <sup>4</sup> show something is not true <sup>5</sup> something that exists and can be

seen, felt, tasted, etc. <sup>6</sup> altering <sup>7</sup> making it change <sup>8</sup> comes to conclusions on the basis of <sup>9</sup> detailed <sup>10</sup> typical



Remember that **phenomenon** is the singular and **phenomena** is the plural. The same applies to **criterion/criteria**. [a standard by which you judge, decide about or deal with something] See also Unit 31.