



*Planning data gathering is critical for success. This section examines the critical issues for data gathering and covers the essentials when developing an overall plan.*

## How Will We Gather Data?

At some point in the inquiry process, it becomes critical to conduct systematic, structured or formalized data gathering. Without valid, reliable and trustworthy evidence, you cannot make informed decisions.

If you have decided to use quantitative methods of collecting data, you or the researchers will be asking people direct or indirect questions that have been predetermined. You will be using surveys and interviews, observation sheets and checklists.

If you are using qualitative methods, the data you gather will be based on the subjective realities of the participants and will not be predetermined. These methods will often contain contextual information, and include methods such as interviews (as conversations), portfolios, audio tapes, journals, video recordings, sociometric procedures and slides.

Do you want to engage in an objective, detached process or is this to be a close, interactive, subjective encounter with participants?

It depends on how the assumptions of the method match the purpose of the inquiry. Does the “problem” seem to be best resolved through the collection of qualitative or quantitative data, or both?

Other considerations include:

- the comfort of the participants with specific methods
- the views on research
- the preference or past experience with one approach or another
- how the data are to be used once they have been gathered.