Steps to Plan a Project

Good projects do not just happen. You have to have a good plan and follow it through. You must be *organized*.

There are seven steps to doing projects well.

1. Pick a topic that is important to you.
2. Decide about a team.
3. Find out what others have done.
4. Plan your project.
5. Do the project and get the information you need to answer your question or show how well the project met its goal.
6. Organize and make sense of all the information.
7. Tell others about the answer and put the answer to use to make life better.

Every project starts with a topic. You may or may not know what you want to find out or try out at this point.

It is good to decide if you will do the project alone or with others. You may want to work as a team if

- you do not have all the skills or time it takes to do the project alone,

- you think other people have ideas that will make the project better, or

- you are part of a group that thinks the topic is important to work on because it affects them.

The team may be called a "steering committee" if the members help make decisions about the project.

The next step is to find out what others have done and found out. The fact you want to find out may already be in reports. So you need to "look it up." This is sometimes called a "literature review."

Once you know what others have found out, you can decide the best way to do your project. You must plan what to do and what information to gather from people to answer the question or show how well the project worked. Researchers call this "collecting data."

You must first plan

- where to get the information,

- how to get the information,

- who to ask, and

- how many places or people to get information from.

It is also important to plan how you will organize the information you get before you collect your data. That way you will know how to make sense of your results. Researchers call this "analyzing the data." How you organize the information you get depends on the kind of information you gather.

Then you are ready to do your project and collect your data.

Once you organize the information, it tells you the answer to your question or how well your project worked. Then you can tell others what you found out, and everyone can put your answer to use.