

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: THE PROS AND CONS

There are many different ways to collect data. The following table discusses some of the commonly used methods, including the resources necessary as well as the benefits and limitations of each method. In order to have a balanced approach in any inquiry, it is important to use a **mixed methods approach**. This means that both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are used in the same study. It is necessary to consider the purpose for collecting data when deciding which method(s) is appropriate for your inquiry.

Consider the following information when deciding on the best approach to data collection for your inquiry.

Method	Resources necessary	Benefits of method	Limitations of method
Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One case, rich with data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to gather detailed data Focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good quality case necessary Small numbers - no generalizability
Document Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents Highlighters/pens, technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thorough look at document Further understanding of content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small numbers – no generalizability Time-consuming to conduct
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group of 7-10 participants Space to meet Recording device, questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple perspectives Interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-consuming to organize/ conduct Recruitment
Graffiti Wall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White paper Coloured markers Tape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple perspectives Interactive/easy to conduct Fun for participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking 'outside the box' Analysis can be challenging
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space to meet Recording device, questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to gather detailed data Focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-consuming to organize/ conduct Recruitment
Survey/ Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper: printing costs Online: survey software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick & easy to administer Large dataset Generalizability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot follow-up for further detail Large amounts of data to analyse