

QUESTION #32

How Can I Create a Good Research Hypothesis?

There are several criteria that make a research hypothesis a good one, and following them is a very good start.

1. A good hypothesis is stated in declarative form and not as a question. “Are swimmers stronger than runners?” is not declarative, but “Swimmers are stronger than runners” is.
2. A good hypothesis posits an expected relationship between variables and clearly states a relationship between variables. For example, the research hypothesis “Children who participate in three hours of lap reading with parents per week will score higher on a test of reading comprehension than children who do not” states a clear relationship between hours of reading and test score.
3. Hypotheses reflect the theory or literature on which they are based. A good hypothesis has a substantive link to existing literature and theory. In the above example, let’s assume there is literature indicating that reading to children is one way to increase their comprehension. The hypothesis is a test of that idea.
4. A hypothesis should be brief and to the point. You want the research hypothesis to describe the relationship between variables and to be as direct and explicit as possible.
5. Good hypotheses are testable hypotheses. This means that one can actually carry out the intent of the question reflected by the hypothesis. For example, number of hours of parental reading and outcome scores as measured by a test of comprehension are all objective and can be incorporated reliably.
6. Finally, a good research hypothesis combines all of the above to be understandable and easy to envision how it fits into the larger world of the research question. After reading such a hypothesis, the reader should have a good grasp of which direction the research is taking and what some of the implications for its testing might be.

More questions? See #9, #29, and #30.