

LITTLE

QUICK FIX:

**RESEARCH
ETHICS**

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Everything in the book!

Section 1 Attending to ethical issues is critical to research.

Becoming familiar with the roles of research ethics, guiding principles, and ethical reviews is a logical place for you to begin.

Section 2 Assessing and mitigating risks to protect participants, researchers, and society throughout the research project is a must!

Distinguishing the unique ethical issues for your research helps you design and conduct ethical research.

Section 3 Providing full information about your research to your potential participants is essential for ensuring free and informed

consent. You also need to consider participant vulnerability and capacity to provide consent to demonstrate the ethical principle *respect for persons* in your research.



Section 4 Preparing for data collection and ensuring privacy is central to maintaining confidentiality. You need to demonstrate the ethical principle *concern for welfare* of those involved in the research and ensure secure data storage of paper and digital files.

Section 5 Detailing equitable procedures is necessary for researchers to demonstrate the ethical principle *concern for justice*. **It's imperative to describe how you will select and treat participants fairly and avoid bias in your research plans.**

Section 6 When your research is finishing, you should take care in planning and implementing appropriate exit and communication strategies with your participants. You want to focus on **reciprocal and respectful interactions to conclude your research studies ethically.**

Section 7 During your research, you should **prepare for a range of ethical issues to arise unexpectedly.** Being able to respond appropriately requires ongoing thought and judgment specific to each research project.

Section

**Attending to
ethical issues
is critical to
research**





**What is
meant by
research
ethics?**

A



Apply ethical reasoning to the
planning and implementing decisions
researchers make to assess and
mitigate risks to protect participants,
researchers, and society.



Research ethics requires planning

Research ethics requires careful planning before conducting research, ethical actions during research, and appropriate responses to emerging issues. You may be thinking, 'If I plan to do ethical research then it will happen right?' The answer is not straightforward because each research study is unique.

A well-articulated research plan that meets the standards for ethical research is a necessary step before beginning. Yet anticipating all the ethical issues that might arise unexpectedly during the study is unlikely so you must be prepared to respond appropriately throughout the research.

Research involves a plan, action, and response cycle to ethical issues. You need to constantly be assessing and mitigating risks to protect participants, researchers, and society by attending to ethical issues as they arise. And the standards for ethical research? We have guiding principles for researchers to follow and ethical reviews of research plans that can support these efforts.

WHY DO WE NEED RESEARCH ETHICS?

Ethical research is essential because it protects participants, researchers, and society.

Understanding how researchers assess vulnerability and risks is important to balance the kinds of benefits that can come from research.



WHO ARE VULNERABLE PERSONS IN RESEARCH?

Protecting the vulnerable is key to research ethics. It can be difficult to define who is vulnerable in research. **There are many ways persons involved in research can be vulnerable:**

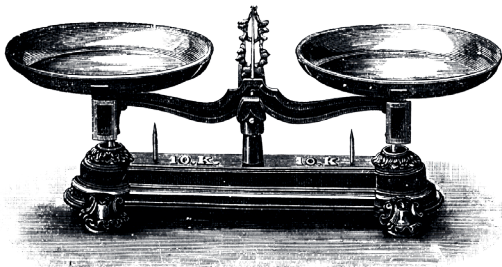
Populations and individuals are seen as vulnerable through clinical assessments or common sense; for example, those that have experienced trauma, those with addictions, disabilities or illnesses, and refugees, are all vulnerable in one way or another.

Vulnerability may be based on age, mental, developmental and intellectual disabilities, institutionalization, language barriers, socioeconomic deprivation, or other factors.

If someone is vulnerable then special protections may be necessary – for example, it is often the case that parental permission is required for participants under the age of 16 but there may be cases where the justification can be made for this to be waived.

WHAT DOES BALANCING RESEARCH RISKS AND BENEFITS INVOLVE?

Benefits usually refer to desirable outcomes for participants, communities and society. Risk, on the other hand, refers to the probability that possible harm may occur. Balancing research risks and benefits involves ethical reasoning and risk management where often there is no clear answer. This balance of risk and benefit requires ongoing thought and judgment specific to each research project.



WHAT PRINCIPLES GUIDE ETHICAL RESEARCH?

The standards for ethical research are guided by three principles. The wording of these principles may appear a little different where you live but their meaning remains the same. It is important that the ethical research principles guide your research planning and implementation.

- 1 The first ethical principle, **respect for persons**, has to do with the treatment of persons and their data involved in the research process. Key ethical issues involve ensuring free and informed consent without interference or coercions – see Section 3, page 39.
- 2 The second ethical principle, **concern for welfare**, is about the protection of participants by minimizing harm and maximizing benefits of the research. Key ethical issues involve protecting privacy and confidentiality of those involved in the research – see Section 4, page 61.
- 3 The third ethical principle, **concern for justice**, refers to the need to treat people fairly and equitably and concerns all who participate in the research. Key ethical issues involve reducing sources of bias in researchers, participants, and designs – see Section 5, page 77.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONDUCT OF ETHICAL RESEARCH?

The researcher is primarily responsible and needs to seek guidance when needed. One way we do that is to require researchers to complete a review of their research by an ethical review board.

Ethical reviews of research can occur in several ways:

If you are a **student** your supervisor would likely read your research plan and provide feedback about ethical issues in need of attention.

If you are undertaking **research as part of an institution** such as a research centre or university then you likely need to submit your research plan for approval by an institutional review board – also called an IRB.

If your **research takes place within a community or organization** you might also need to submit your research plan for approval by a community or organizational-based review board such as a school organization or indigenous community.

CAUTIONS!



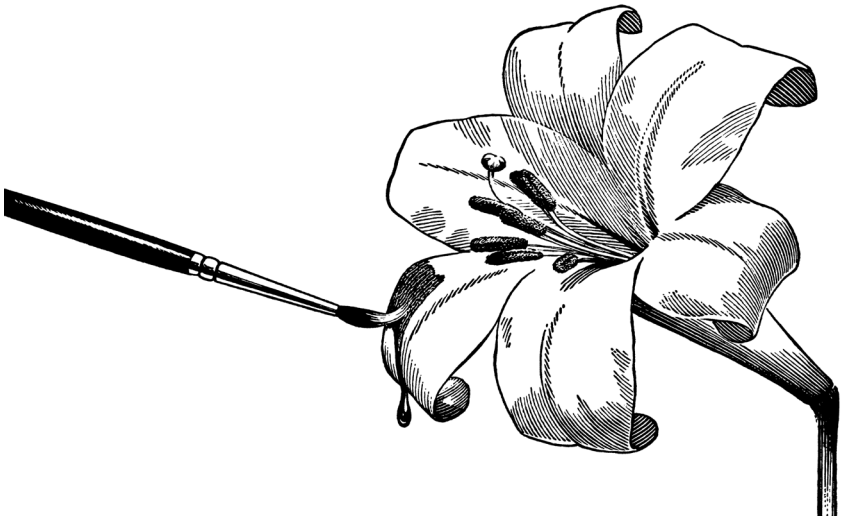
Be aware and plan accordingly as ethical reviews can take time to complete and some have strict guidelines and submission deadlines for research approvals.

Consider that ethical issues can arise at any time. **Research ethics involves a plan, action, and response cycle** to realize the standards of ethical research.



WHAT IS YOUR FAMILIARITY WITH RESEARCH ETHICS?

- 1 Can you explain why the **treatment of persons and their data** involved in the research process is an ethical responsibility?
- 2 Can you justify why researchers must **minimize harm and maximize benefits** in their research?
- 3 Can you defend the need to **treat people fairly and equitably** as research participants?





CHECKPOINT

4 Can you describe the **role of research ethics reviews?**

5 Can you assess potential **participant vulnerability?**

If you can answer 'yes' to each of these, then you are ready to apply your understandings of research ethics to a study!

A large, stylized white number '2' is centered on a solid blue background. The number is thick and has a clean, modern look. The top curve is smooth, and the bottom curve is also smooth, ending in a horizontal bar.

Section

**Distinguishing the unique
ethical issues for your
research helps you design and
conduct ethical research.**





**How do I
identify
critical ethical
issues for my
research?**

A



Outline the why, who, where, how and what of your research to begin identifying critical ethical issues in relation to the guiding ethical principles.



Planning is essential

A well-considered, well-articulated list of ethical issues and plans to mitigate will guide you in the conduct of ethical research. It will help you to identify ethical issues to anticipate and point you to issues that might arise. While it is impossible to anticipate and plan for all scenarios where ethical issues will arise, if you do not know what issues to monitor then you will not be able to respond.

Research can differ in many ways and present unique ethical issues. To help identify critical ethical issues in your research, we describe some of the most common ethical issues that arise from research under the following conditions. These are:

- 1 Problems that require data to be collected directly from participants and thus require considerations of privacy and confidentiality.
- 2 Research considered worthy of pursuit where the potential benefits outweigh the risks and thus is committed to equitable and fair treatment of people, communities, and data.
- 3 Research participants who are legally competent and thus have enough decision-making capacity to consent to research.

DISTINGUISHING UNIQUE ETHICAL ISSUES FOR YOUR RESEARCH

Without clear articulation of our research details and the possible ethical issues we must attend to, it is impossible to plan for them. A well-articulated list of ethical issues relevant to your study provides both you and your readers with information related to the three ethical research principles:



Respect for persons – see Section 3, page 39

- How will you ensure free and informed participation in your research?
- How will you avoid interference or coercions?

Concern for welfare – see Section 4, page 61

- How will you minimize harm and maximize the benefits of your research?
- How will you protect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved in the research?

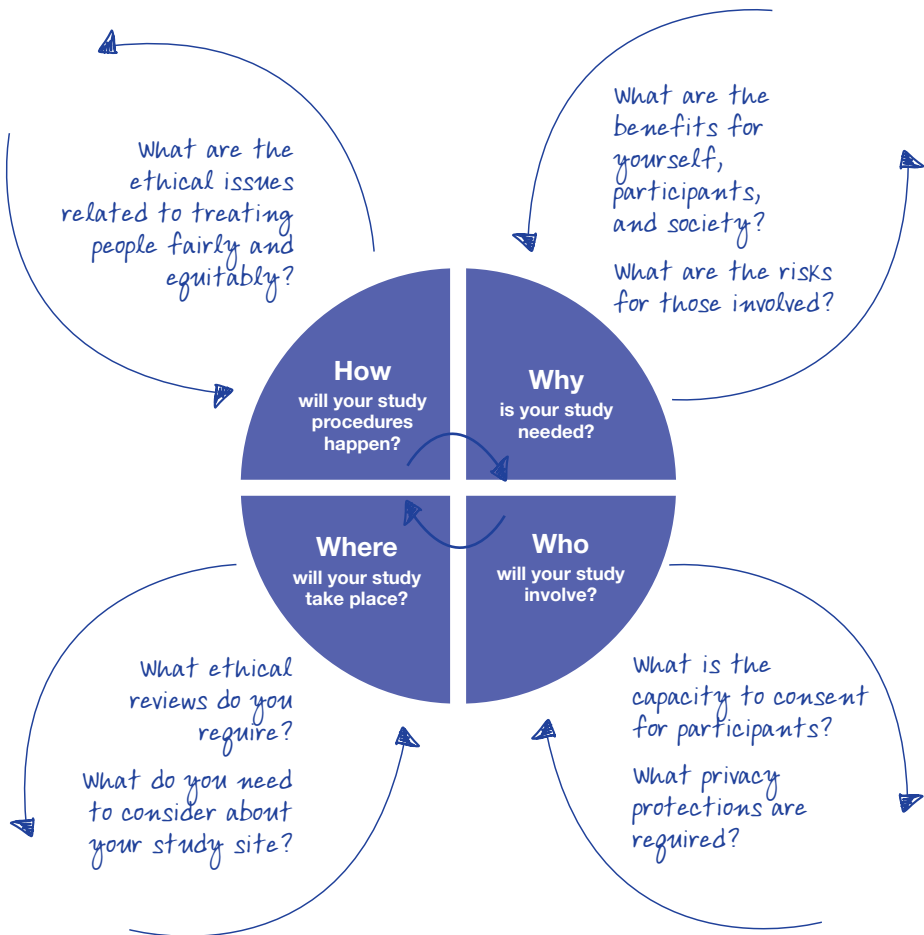
Concern for justice – see Section 5, page 77.

- How will you treat people fairly and equitably in your research?
- How will you select participants, collect data, and report findings and avoid bias?

RESEARCH PLANS GUIDE ETHICAL RESEARCH

The first step in assessing and mitigating risks to protect participants, researchers, and society is to fully describe our research plans. The questions on the following page can guide your planning and identifying ethical issues in your research.

Answers to these questions are necessary to identify critical ethical issues in need of your attention and are relevant to the three principles of ethical research. It also helps to assure others of your ability to conduct ethical research.





DO IT YOURSELF

PLANNING AND IDENTIFYING ETHICAL ISSUES IN YOUR RESEARCH

Here are some questions to guide your research planning:

Why is your study needed?

.....
.....

Who will your study involve?

.....
.....

Where will your study take place?

.....
.....

How will your study procedures happen?

.....
.....

Now use the following questions to guide identifying your critical ethics issues in your research:

What benefits do you anticipate from your research; for yourself, your research participants, and society?

.....
.....



What risks do you anticipate for those involved in your research?

- Mental health such as stress and embarrassment
- Physical health such as medical burdens
- Social wellbeing such as risks to employment

What vulnerability of persons do you anticipate for those involved in your research?

- Population characteristics such as language barriers, common experiences, socioeconomic deprivation
- Individual qualities such as age, disability, legal competency

How will you protect the privacy of your research participants?

- Methods of data collection
- Data management and storage

What ethical reviews approvals do you need?

- Institutional
- Community or organizational

What procedures will ensure the equitable and fair treatment of people in your research?

- Participant recruitment and sampling
- Data collection and reporting

In the next sections, we will revisit your answers here and create a plan for addressing your critical ethics issues in your research.



CHECKPOINT

Get it?

Q: Why is it necessary to describe a detailed research plan?

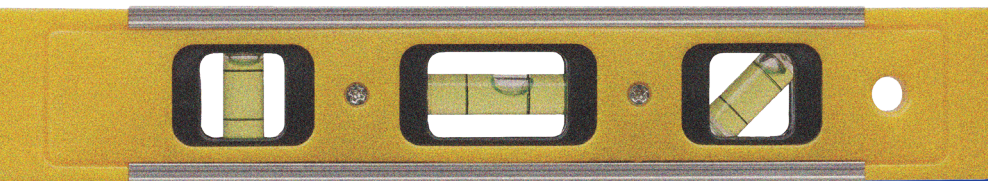


Got it!

A: To identify critical ethical issues and guide the conduct of ethical research.

**I CAN DISTINGUISH
THE UNIQUE ETHICAL ISSUES
FOR MY RESEARCH AND
BEGIN TO MAKE PLANS
TO MITIGATE THEM!**

.....



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