

Research & Analysis / Source Summaries

Extract just the methods section from any study in a standardized, comparable format.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini

Use Case: Research Review, Study Comparison, Due Diligence

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Why This Prompt Exists

A study's conclusions are only as good as its methods — but methods sections are dense, jargon-filled, and easy to skim past.

You get:

- citing findings without knowing if the methods support them
- missing fatal flaws that invalidate conclusions
- comparing studies with different methods as if they were equivalent
- spending hours parsing methods sections to find basic information
- trusting peer review instead of verifying yourself

But methods can be standardized:

- design: experiment, quasi-experiment, correlational, qualitative
- sample: size, source, representativeness, attrition
- measures: what, how, validity, reliability
- analysis: statistical tests, controls, assumptions
- limitations: what the authors admit (and what they miss)

Without methods extraction, you trust blindly.

This prompt creates a standardized methods snapshot for any study.

The Prompt

Assume the role of a methods reviewer who extracts study methodology.

Your task is to create a standardized methods snapshot from a study.

Generate:

1. DESIGN

- Research design: [Experimental / Quasi-experimental / Correlational / Qualitative / Mixed-methods]
- Temporal: [Cross-sectional / Longitudinal / Retrospective]
- Randomization? [Yes / No / Not applicable]
- Control group? [Yes / No / Not applicable]

2. SAMPLE

- Sample size: [N]
- Population: [description]
- Recruitment method: [Random / Convenience / Purposive / Snowball]
- Attrition rate: [% if reported]
- Power analysis? [Yes / No – if yes, effect size assumed]

3. MEASURES

- Primary outcome: [what, how measured, reliability if reported]
- Key predictors: [what, how measured]
- Control variables: [list]

4. PROCEDURE

- Setting: [Lab / Field / Online / Mixed]

- Duration: [How long participants were involved]
- Key steps: [brief timeline]

5. ANALYSIS

- Primary statistical tests: [t-test / ANOVA / Regression / etc.]
- Software: [SPSS / R / Stata / etc.]
- Assumptions checked? [Yes / No / Not reported]
- Multiple comparison correction? [Yes / No / Not applicable]

6. METHODS-RELATED LIMITATIONS

- What the authors acknowledge
- What they missed (based on methods summary)

7. METHODS TRUST SCORE

- 5 (Exemplary) to 1 (Fatally flawed)

INPUTS:

Source content (methods section required):

[PASTE OR UPLOAD]

Study type:

[ACADEMIC PAPER / INDUSTRY REPORT / GOVERNMENT STUDY]

Your field expertise:

[HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW]

RULES:

- Only report what the source explicitly states (don't assume)

- Flag "not reported" explicitly – missing information is information
- Distinguish between what authors claim (e.g., "random") and what they actually did
- Note when methods are described vaguely (e.g., "standard procedures")
- If sample size is small, flag as potential power concern

How To Use It

- Run this before citing any study — methods determine whether you can trust the findings.
- Use the standardized format to compare methods across multiple studies quickly.
- Pay closest attention to sample (is it representative?) and randomization (can they claim causation?).
- Flag “not reported” items — these are red flags for low-quality research.
- A low methods trust score doesn’t mean ignore the study — it means cite with heavy caveats.

Example Input

Source content (methods section):

“We recruited 150 undergraduate psychology students (mean age 19.2, 65% female) from participant pool. Participants completed a 10-minute online survey measuring grit (12-item Grit-S scale, $\alpha = .85$) and academic performance (self-reported GPA). No power analysis reported. Data analyzed using Pearson correlations in SPSS.”

Study type:

Academic paper

Your field expertise:

Medium

Why It Works

Most people skip to the conclusions and trust that the methods were sound — a dangerous assumption.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- design specification (what kind of evidence is this?)
- sample evaluation (who was studied — and who wasn't)
- measurement review (how was the key outcome measured?)
- analysis audit (were the right tests used?)
- limitation identification (what the authors admit — and what they don't)
- trust score (explicit evaluation, not implicit)

Great methodology snapshots don't just describe methods — they tell you whether to trust the findings.

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