

# Developing a research strategy

## Aspects of a research strategy

A research strategy consists of:

- planning
- a literature search
- the research hypothesis
- a literature review
- research design or methodology
- collecting, collating and analysing data
- drawing conclusions
- writing a report.

## Planning

Projects and dissertations require good management.

- Draw up an action plan (pages 18 and 270–1).
- Set clear targets and milestones (page 72).
- Get support – find people who will motivate you and share ideas (page 105).
- Leave plenty of time for editing, printing, copying and binding the final report.

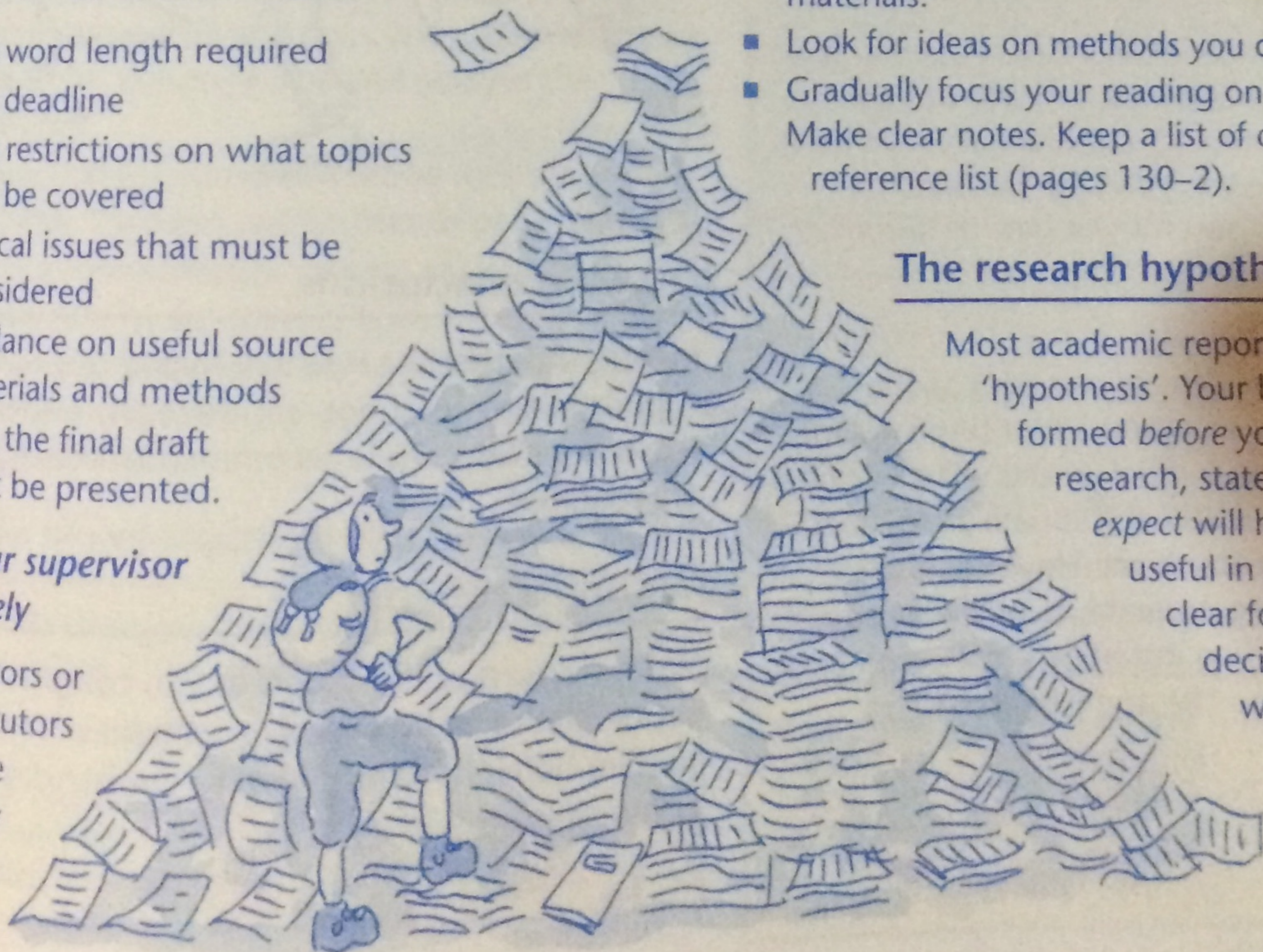
## Read the assignment brief carefully

Your tutors will guide you on how to approach the project or dissertation. Check:

- the word length required
- the deadline
- any restrictions on what topics can be covered
- ethical issues that must be considered
- guidance on useful source materials and methods
- how the final draft must be presented.

## Use your supervisor effectively

Supervisors or project tutors are there primarily to guide you.



- Check early on that you are on the right track: a large project is harder to turn around later.
- Take advice about the title.
- Take advice on appropriate reading.
- Take advice on the methods to use.
- Find out what software is available to analyse data, and where you can learn to use this.
- Check that you are working to the right scale. Is your project too ambitious? Is it challenging enough?

## Literature search

- Allocate time to browse titles in the library catalogues. Check that there is sufficient relevant and up-to-date material which you can obtain easily.
- Browse through student dissertations in your university library. Develop a feel for what is a suitable project for your subject, taking account of the word limit.
- Read the abstracts of a range of journal articles. Identify which would be most relevant to read later in full.
- Identify key articles, chapters of books, conference papers, webpages and other materials.
- Look for ideas on methods you could adapt.
- Gradually focus your reading on a specific topic. Make clear notes. Keep a list of details for your reference list (pages 130–2).

## The research hypothesis

Most academic reports include a 'hypothesis'. Your hypothesis, formed *before* you start the research, states what you *expect* will happen. It is useful in giving you a clear focus when deciding exactly what to read, measure and report. See page 265.