Writing research proposals — a few points
• general points
  – your writing should be clear, compelling, consistent
  – perfection in spelling, grammar, and punctuation should among your goals
  – word choice - remember effectiveness of communication is your primary objective
  – use a parallel structure (e.g., the order you present hypotheses in your introduction should be the same order hypothesis tests are presented in the research plan and the results are presented)
– work from the general to the specific
  * the specific system as a way to address a general problem
– alternative, work from the specific to the general
  * the more general importance of your specific system
– formalisms (i.e., expressions presented mathematically or symbolically)
  ∗ use when, and only when, necessary
  ∗ always explain the same concept again in prose
– use typography thoughtfully and to your advantage
  * immediately identifiable structural elements
    • heading, sub-headings, sub-sub-headings, paragraphs
    • numbered lists
    • bulleted lists
  * fonts
    • use only a few types (i.e., font families)
    • use only a few sizes
    • emphasis (use sparingly)
  * whitespace
• basic sections
  – introduction and background
    ∗ establish the context for the research
    ∗ establish the importance of the research
    ∗ articulate the goals, objectives, questions, or hypotheses
    ∗ make it so compelling that the reader wants to know the answers
- materials and methods, or research plan
  * sampling strategy and design
  * rationale for sampling strategy
  * data collection or generation
  * data analysis
    - descriptive analyses
    - hypothesis testing
  * expected results or possible outcomes
    - descriptive results organized by data type
    - hypothesis test results
  * proactively address concerns or objections
    - describe possible challenges and how they will be dealt with
* references or literature cited
  · use bibliographic software (and use it well)
  · be consistent in formatting
  · although preferences vary, numbered references have advantages