

# THE STATSWHISPERER™

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## Introduction to this Issue

We would like to devote this issue to one of our favorite proposal tools, the Gantt chart. The Gantt chart is a way to list each phase of a proposed study, as well as the timeline for each phase all in one table. Hallelujah!

On the face of it, you as a proposal writer might think such a chart sounds rather useful. If so, terrific! However, as much as the grant writer might appreciate this chart, the grant reviewer is likely to appreciate it much more. You can imagine how much a busy proposal reviewer (e.g., grant reviewers, potential funders, and/or a dissertation committee) might appreciate being able to turn to one table that lists all the study phases and timelines.

Seemingly, such consideration on behalf of the proposal writer should only increase the chances of having a proposal reviewed favorably.

## The Gantt chart: Gantt live with it, Gantt live without it

Why can't you live with or without a Gantt chart? First, it is hard to live with the Gantt chart because you must define each phase of your proposed study. You will start to see quickly that there may be many more than you initially anticipated. Next, you must assign each phase a projected timeline!

This is a process that most people never approach in any capacity in their lifetime! Thus, at times, especially if this is a first try, specifying study phases and the time needed to complete each phase may be a little demanding.

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Just remember, whether it is pursuant of a research study, dissertation study, or marriage, a proposal needs to be made as attractive as possible!

By the way, the use of a Gantt chart in a marriage proposal is something we have never heard of, but that is not to say that it might not work. If any readers of this publication use the Gantt chart for this purpose please feel to contact us and let us know how it went!

Why can't you live without the Gantt chart? First of all, this is a great tool for organization. Once you go through the trouble of writing the chart out, you have a great idea of what you have to do and how long it will take to do each part.

The reviewer may grasp the point of your proposal much faster. Most reviewers need to read several pages into a proposal to begin to understand the project. However, a Gantt chart can often orient the reviewer to every phase of a study before one word of text is read. How many tools can do that?

## The ABCs of the Gantt chart

Essentially, a Gantt chart is a type of bar chart that illustrates the phases and time line of a project. Table 1 (below) presents an example of a very watered down Gantt chart. Obviously, a project would have many more steps relative to what is listed in Table 1. However, for the sake of simplicity, we boiled this study down into a few key phases.

You may note in Table 1, the word "Activity" is at the top of the left hand column. Each line below lists a specific activity that is an essential phase of the proposed study. By the way, these activities within a Gantt chart are sometimes referred to as terminal elements and summary elements. These elements are essentially the work breakdown structure of the project.

You may also note that all the columns to the right of the first column have a specified time interval. This size of the intervals may be adjusted, but the entire duration of the study should be listed.

You will see that the boxes beneath each column are shaded with a gray filling (25%) when the box is applicable to the activity listed. For example, regarding the fourth activity listed, "Delivery of the Program," months 7-11, 12-18, and 19-25, are shaded gray. This denotes that the program delivery will begin in the interval for project month 7-11 and continue until 19-25. The specific duration of "Delivery of the Program" can be mentioned in the text. Here we are just presenting a summary.

You may also notice that some of the shaded boxes are stacked upon one another. This simply denotes that these phases of the project occur simultaneously or at least within the same time interval. For example, the "Completion of baseline measures" and "Delivery of the program" both occur in months 7-11. This is intuitive as program delivery should commence soon after baseline measures are administered.

Table 1. The Gantt Chart

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Months 1-6</b>	<b>Months 7-11</b>	<b>Months 12-18</b>	<b>Months 19-25</b>	<b>Months 26-35</b>	<b>Months 36-42</b>
Complete hiring and training of study staff	X					
Recruitment of study participants	X	X				
Completion of baseline measures		X				
Delivery of program		X	X	X		
Completion of post-test measures				X		
Data analysis, manuscript preparation, and dissemination				X	X	X

## In Summary

### Overall

In summary, it could be stated that the Gantt chart is a relatively simple and useful tool. It is potentially useful for scheduling a project and expressing to others (especially funders and others who review proposals) how a project should proceed.

The Gantt chart may seem like a small detail, but when the tool was first created it was a major innovation. For example, in recognition of the achievements of Henry Gantt, the creator of the Gantt chart, today the Henry Laurence Gantt Medal is awarded for distinguished achievement in management and in community service.

Furthermore, if this tool is instrumental in getting a study or dissertation proposal passed, especially in the case of securing funding, it is surely worthy of consideration.

### Small details

There are a few small details that may come up as you structure a chart, but none that should pose a great challenge. For example, a Gantt chart with a great number of listed activities may start to become unwieldy and confusing.

The good news is that if you ever need help in structuring a Gantt chart, there are a bevy of on-line resources to aid you. Just type Gantt chart into the Google search engine and you will see what I mean. The first step is awareness. Once you are aware the tool exists, you should have little trouble making it work for you.

The placement of the Gantt chart within a proposal is also a significant issue. A good place to put the chart may be at the end of the proposal, after the methods, but before the references and administrative paperwork. This is a nice place to put the summary that the Gantt chart presents.

Happy Holidays!



**"It's hard to be jolly when you have to work on Christmas!"**

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