

Some Purposive Sampling Strategies¹

Strategy	Process
Stakeholder Sampling	Useful in evaluation research/policy analysis; identify who the major stakeholders are who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, administering or will be affected by the program/service.
Extreme or Deviant Case Sampling	These represent the purest/most clear cut instance of a phenomenon of interest, e.g., in a study of management styles, might pick an organization that did exceptionally well and/or poorly; mistakes.
Typical Case Sampling	Sometimes we are interested in cases simply because they are <i>not</i> unusual in any way, e.g., Becker and his colleagues' study of medical students at the University of Kansas Medical School.
Paradigmatic Case Sampling	"Paradigmatic" = the exemplar for a certain class. For example, the paradigmatic case in hockey of a successful sports franchise would be the Montreal Canadiens; for baseball it would be the New York Yankees or, for different reasons, the Oakland A's.
Maximum Variation Sampling	Searching for cases or individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying; would include extreme and typical cases plus any other key positions.
Criterion Sampling	Cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion, e.g., that they have a certain disease or have had a particular life experience. For example, looking for men who have been clients of sex workers.
Theory-guided Sampling	Researchers following a more deductive or theory-testing approach seek individuals/cases that embody theoretical constructs. A particular type of criterion sampling.
Critical case sampling	Looking for a "decisive" case that would help make a decision about which of several different explanations is most plausible, or is one that is identified by experts as being a particularly useful site because of the generalizations it allows, e.g., life at the bottom of the ocean.
Disconfirming or Negative Case Sampling	Researcher is looking to extend his or her analysis by looking for cases that will disconfirm it, both to test theory and simply because it is often from our failures that we learn the most. "If you think your results are not generalizable or the existence of a particular kind of case will undermine all that you 'know' to be true about a phenomenon, then look for that kind of case."
Expert Sampling	Looking for individuals who have particular expertise that is most likely to be able to advance the researcher's interests and potentially open new doors, e.g., as occurs in Commissions of Inquiry.
Random Sampling	Looking for a representative sample of an identified population

¹ From Palys, T.S. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L. Givens (Ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA. Vol.2, pp.697-698.