Research Methods focuses on decisions and conclusions, rather than rules and procedures, to help students develop the critical-thinking skills necessary for understanding and designing research. The text emphasizes the need to evaluate a design's strengths and weaknesses when selecting a method and interpreting results.

The Second Edition includes a full chapter on ethics and places the statistics review after the introduction of basic design issues to focus on statistics as a set of tools for analyzing research results. A unique capstone chapter, Designing and Evaluating Research, walks students through four research studies, summarizes content, and suggests additional topics for research.