

# The Brookbush Institute Publishes a NEW Glossary Term: 'Prospective Study'

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-- - Excerpt from Glossary Term:

[Prospective Study](#)

- Additional Glossary Term: [Evidence-based Practice](#)

- Related Certifications: [Massage Therapy Continuing Education](#)

## DEFINITION

**Prospective Study:** A prospective study is a research design in which

participants are identified and enrolled before outcomes occur, and then followed over time to observe the relationship between exposures (independent variables) and outcomes (dependent variables). Because data is collected forward in time, prospective studies establish temporal sequence, making them stronger than retrospective studies for evaluating potential causal



Prospective observational research is the most logical choice when studying harmful or naturally occurring exposures (e.g., injury risk factors) that cannot ethically be assigned experimentally."

*Dr. Brent Brookbush, CEO of  
Brookbush Institute*

relationships. They are commonly used in epidemiology, clinical research, and human movement science to study risk factors, intervention outcomes, and the natural history of conditions.

## SEMANTIC CLARIFICATION

- "Prospective" indicates that the study begins before outcomes have occurred, with data gathered as events unfold forward in time.
- "Study" emphasizes systematic, replicable observation or measurement according to predefined protocols.

## APPLIED EXAMPLE

### Prospective Study

A **prospective study** is research that follows participants forward in time to examine relationships between an exposure and subsequent outcomes.

#### KEY FEATURES

- Begins before outcomes occur
- Tracks participants over a period of time
- Identifies outcomes as they happen



**EXAMPLE** Athletes are tested for hip strength and monitored over an athletic season to compare injury rates in stronger vs. weaker participants.

Prospective Study -

<https://brookbushinstitute.com/glossary/prospective-study>

- Research Question: Does hip abductor strength predict future knee injuries in athletes?
- Prospective Study Design: A group of athletes is tested at baseline for hip abductor strength. They are then monitored throughout a sports season. Injury incidence is recorded, and outcomes are compared between stronger vs. weaker athletes.
- Why Prospective is Appropriate: Because outcomes (injuries) have not yet occurred, prospective monitoring ensures that exposure (strength level) clearly precedes outcome, strengthening causal inference compared to retrospective methods. Note, an experimental design, in which the abductors are weakened, and the effects are monitored, would not be ethical.
- Real World Example: Ramskov, D., Barton, C., Nielsen, R. O., and Rasmussen, S. (2015). High Eccentric Hip Abduction Strength Reduces the Risk of Developing Patellofemoral Pain Among Novice Runners Initiating a Self-Structured Running Program: A 1-Year Observational Study. *Journal of orthopaedic and sports physical therapy*, 45(3), 153-161

## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

### Strengths

- Establishes temporal sequence (exposure before outcome), providing stronger evidence for causal inference than retrospective research.
- Reduces vulnerability to recall when compared to retrospective designs.
- Enables study of multiple outcomes from a single exposure.

### Limitations...

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