

Fundamental vs. Applied Research and Development

According to the *National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development Survey FY 2014*:

“Research and development (R&D) is creative work conducted systematically to increase the stock of knowledge (research) and to use this stock of knowledge to devise new applications (development). R&D covers three activities defined below—basic research, applied research, and development.

- Basic research is undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge without any particular application or use in mind.
- Applied research is conducted to gain the knowledge or understanding to meet a specific, recognized need.
- Development is the systematic use of the knowledge or understanding gained from research directed toward the production of useful materials, devices, systems, or methods, including the design and development of prototypes and processes.”

Examples		
Basic research	Applied research	Development
A researcher is studying the properties of human blood to determine what affects coagulation.	A researcher is conducting research on how a new chicken pox vaccine affects blood coagulation.	A researcher is conducting clinical trials to test a newly developed chicken pox vaccine for young children.
A researcher is studying the properties of molecules under various heat and cold conditions.	A researcher is investigating the properties of particular substances under various heat and cold conditions with the objective of finding longer-lasting components for highway pavement.	A researcher is working with state transportation officials to conduct tests of a newly developed highway pavement under various types of heat and cold conditions.
A researcher is studying the heart chambers of various fish species.	A researcher is examining various levels of a toxic substance to determine the maximum safe level for fish in a stream.	A researcher has a contract with the U.S. government to design a new stream monitoring system that will incorporate the latest research findings on toxicity levels for fish.

Table excerpted directly from National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development Survey FY 2014, p. 8.