Common data collection and measurement methods used in nursing research include physiological measures, observation, interviews, questionnaires, and scales.

Observational measurement involves an interaction between the subjects and the observer(s), where the observer has the opportunity to watch the subject in a specific setting. Unstructured observations involve spontaneously observing and recording what is seen in words. Structured observations are carefully defined, with specific guidelines about how the observations are to be made, recorded, and coded.

An interview involves verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. There are varieties of approaches, ranging from unstructured interviews, in which the content is completely controlled by the subject, to structured interviews with carefully designed responses. A questionnaire, or survey, is a self-report form designed to elicit information through written, verbal, or electronic responses. They are distributed and administered in a variety of ways. The information obtained from questionnaires is similar to that obtained by an interview, but the questions tend to have less depth; however, questions are presented in a consistent manner and the opportunity for bias is less.

A scale is a more precise means of measuring than a questionnaire. Most scales measure psychosocial variables; there are some used with physiological variables, such as pain or nausea. Items on summated scales are summed to obtain a single score.

Commonly used scales include rating scales, Likert scales, and visual analog scales. A rating scale lists an ordered series of categories of a variable that are assumed to be based on an underlying continuum. A numerical value is assigned to each category, and the fineness of the distinctions between categories varies with the scale.

Likert scales, the most commonly used of scaling techniques, are designed to determine the opinions or attitudes of study subjects. This scale contains a number of declarative statements with a scale after each statement. Response choices in a Likert scale most commonly address agreement, evaluation, or frequency.

The visual analog scale (VAS) is typically used to measure strength, magnitude, or intensity of individuals' subjective feelings, sensations, or attitudes about symptoms or situations.