SONA EXPERIMENTER GUIDELINES

Your Role as an Experimenter
To be an experimenter is to assume an important professional role—one should always act in a mature and responsible fashion when dealing with research participants. Remember that you are acting as a representative of the Psychology department—negative comments, attitudes, or misinformation reflect poorly on the department and its research endeavors. The Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, as well as the American Psychological Association's Ethical Standards for Human Psychological Research, ensures the participant's privacy, dignity, and well-being. These guidelines are in place for the protection of all concerned with the use of human subjects. It is your responsibility as an experimenter to respect and maintain these basic civil liberties. If you have problems or questions, you can consult with the departmental research coordinator, your main experimenter, or your faculty research supervisor.

Our university, our department, scientific journals, and all funding agencies take the ethics of research on human subjects very seriously. Therefore, all experimenters are obligated to take them very seriously too, no matter how low-risk you perceive your experiment to be. Please realize that failure to adhere to the following guidelines may result in suspension of your privilege to conduct research on human subjects at this university.

I. Human Subjects Research Training
   A. All researchers: Please complete the Human Subjects Research Training and the Financial Conflict of Interest Training: http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html
   B. Main experimenters: Please add research staff to your approved protocol using the Research Personnel for Amendment Application: http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/forms.html. When the amendment has been approved, please notify the research coordinator with the approved researcher’s name, UT EID, email address, and the related IRB protocol. A Researcher account will be created in Sona and login information will be emailed.

II. Experiment Approval
   A. Main experimenters: Please visit http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humanresearch/ to review the IRB process and download the appropriate forms to complete your IRB submission. When you submit your application, it will be sent to the research coordinator to confirm that documents are in order, forwarded to the departmental review committee (DRC) chair for review, and then formally submitted to the IRB for approval.
   B. Your study needs to be approved by the DRC chair and the IRB. You will receive notice when the experiment has been approved by the IRB and you can only recruit participants once you have received this approval.
   C. Once your experiment has been approved by the IRB, you will need to see the research coordinator in SEA 4.212 to complete a brief Sona training session or email to request a copy of the Sona training manual (psyresearch@austin.utexas.edu).
   D. After your experiment has been approved, each person working with the experiment must read this handout. Copies are available online and in display bins outside SEA 4.208. Please sign and return the last page of the handout (the Experimenter Briefing Verification Form) to the research coordinator.

III. Recruiting Participants
   A. Participants can be recruited after:
      1) Your research proposal has been approved by the IRB
      2) All experimenters have read this handout
      3) The Sona Experiment post has been approved by the research coordinator.
   B. Experiment participation opportunities should be posted on Sona, the Psychology experiment registration site, by going to https://utexas.sona-systems.com. First, log on as a Researcher using your UT EID, then click on “Add New Study.” Next, select the type of study you need, and complete all requested information. If you have not worked with Sona previously, please plan to schedule an appointment with the research coordinator to go over instructions on how to properly create and manage experiment sessions in the system.
   C. Please accurately advertise your experiment. Study titles should be chosen for relevance and text should accurately demonstrate what participants will be expected to do in the lab. Stating on your Sona post that your experiment takes less time than the amount of credit listed or grants more credit than reflected in the time commitment is unfair to other experimenters. Experiment postings that do not follow these rules will be removed from the system.
D. Sona experiment posts must be approved by the research coordinator—please allow five days for review. Once approved, you can add timeslots to allow participants to register. If changes are made to a study with approved status, the study is automatically “unapproved” until the research coordinator can review changes. Please send an email outlining changes to psyresearch@austin.utexas.edu.

E. Please review the last day to run experiments for the current semester (see “Important Dates” on Psychology website)—timeslots should not be created past this date. If your main experimenter does not already have lab space for you to run your experiment, please see the research coordinator or complete a Psychology Lab Space Application form to address reserving a room.

IV. When Participant Arrives at the Experiment
Each experimenter must follow the procedure as outlined below:
A. Experiments must be conducted in a professional and ethical manner. Participants are not to be coerced in any way into participating in experiments. Participants are treated ethically not only by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm, but also by making efforts to secure their well-being. Participants must be permitted to leave the experiment at any time without pressure or penalty. They can also complete a research paper as an alternative to participating in studies and should contact the research coordinator for information.

B. Ask all participants whether they are over the age of 18. If they are not, you must confirm that they have turned in an Experimental Permission Form. If a participant is not yet 18 years of age and has not submitted the Experimental Permission Form, please excuse them from the experiment. Direct them to the bins outside SEA 4.208 where they can pick up and return the Experimental Permission Form before they can participate in experiments.

C. When the participant enters the lab, the experimenter must provide the participant with written information about the subject's participation in the experiment—the Informed Consent Document (ICD). The ICD should contain sufficient information to allow the subject to decide whether they want to participate in the research. Experimenters should receive the ICD from their research supervisor.

D. If the subject agrees to participate, they must sign the ICD provided by the experimenter. The main experimenter will secure the original copy as outlined in the IRB protocol and a copy of the document should be offered to the participant for their records.

E. When the subject has agreed to participate, you can then run the subject in the study according to the procedures that have been approved by the IRB. Participants must be permitted to leave the experiment at any time without pressure or penalty.

F. If the subject chooses not to participate, please inform them that they can register for any of the other studies posted on Sona. They can also complete a research paper as an alternative to participating in studies and should contact the research coordinator or the teaching assistant for the course.

G. Multiple session experiments are treated the same as a series of single experiments, in that if a person does one session of a 2- 3- 4- or 5-session study and decides not to participate further, the subject gets credit for the one session and NO penalty as long as they cancel the remaining sessions with due notice. If a participant goes to the first session and none of the remaining sessions without notice, the participant would receive credit for the session they attended and an unexcused absence for missing any remaining sessions. Students who receive three unexcused absences will no longer be able to participate in studies.

H. At the end of the experiment, you will need to:
1) Give each participant a written debriefing statement
2) Set aside enough time to answer any questions that the participant might have
3) Grant credit or complete an attendance report (excused or unexcused absence) through Sona.

V. General Information
A. Penalties
If a participant arrives to your experiment late (by minutes, hours, or even days) they should receive an "unexcused" absence. Three unexcused absences will prohibit a student from further participation in studies. Giving late participants credit or waiving their penalty is unfair to students who show up on time. The student may participate in your study at a later date, however participation does not remove the unexcused absence. Participants who notify you within the set cancellation time should receive an “excused” absence.

B. Sona Credits Overview
Psychology 301 participants will be able to monitor credit status through their Sona account. Sona will be their only verification that they have participated in your experiment. Students should be encouraged to log in to Sona regularly and take a screen shot of the Credits Overview page for their records.
C. Guidelines for Phoning Participants
1) Experimenters are not permitted to call or e-mail subject pool participants to solicit their participation in an experiment without prior permission from the research coordinator. The calling of participants is discouraged except in cases where the number of eligible participants is so small that they are unlikely to be obtainable through sign-up sheets and eligibility lists. The DRC has determined that ALL calling or e-mailing to solicit subject pool participants will be done ONLY by the main experimenter. The web sign-up system, Sona, should be utilized.
2) If a valid, justifiable reason does exist for student research assistants to assist with placing phone calls, the main experimenter must obtain permission from the subject pool committee chair. After the main experimenter has received permission to call participants and before he/she begins the calling process, the main experimenter must contact the research coordinator to review the procedures for calling participants. The main experimenter is responsible for insuring these procedures are followed.

D. When the Participant Arrives Late or Unexpectedly to the Experiment
1) If a participant arrives to your experiment late, they should receive an “unexcused” absence
2) If the participant has a valid excuse for being late, the participant should receive an “excused” absence.
3) If a participant arrives unexpectedly to an experiment and you are able to run them without upsetting your schedule, run the participant, then assign the participant credit via the “Manual Sign Up” function. It is important that you know how to use this function. If you do not know how to use it, please make an appointment with the research coordinator to learn how. If you cannot run an unexpected subject who would like to participate in your study, direct them to the online experiment system where they can sign up to participate in your study at a later date.

E. Cancelled Session
You may cancel an experiment session ONLY when it is impossible for you or another lab member to keep the appointment. Please attempt to notify your main experimenter or a co-researcher and request that they meet the participants and run the experiment. If this is not possible, subjects who signed up to participate in the cancelled session will receive one hour of cancellation credit. Cancellation credit indicates that the subject could not participate in the experiment due to circumstances beyond their control, that they are still naive about the nature of that experiment, and that they are eligible to sign up for that experiment or another one in that number group and still receive credit. If the cancellation credit is part of a multiple session experiment, the participant should receive cancellation credit only for the session that was canceled.

F. Psychology 301 Research Requirement
Please review the Psychology 301 portion of the website to familiarize yourself with the procedures the participants must follow.

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EXPERIMENTER BRIEFING VERIFICATION FORM

This is to certify that I have read and understand the experimenter guidelines set forth by the DRC and the IRB for running participants. Please check the following:

________ I understand the responsibilities of an experimenter in the Psychology Department.

________ I understand the procedure of obtaining informed consent when a participant arrives for a study.

________ I acknowledge that attendance reports and credit are to be submitted/granted soon after each session is over for the day.

________ I understand how to report attendance (credit and penalties) in Sona or will meet with a graduate student/lab manager to learn how to submit these reports.

________ I have reviewed the first and last dates to run participants (see Important Dates on Psychology website)

I understand that my failure to abide by these guidelines may result in my not being allowed to do research using human subjects.

Name________________________________________________________

E-Mail Address____________________________________ Phone (_____) _______-___________

UTEID___________________________________________

Faculty Sponsor (Which lab are you working in)__________________________________________

Main Experimenter (Typically a graduate student)________________________________________

Sona Experiment Name_______________________________________________

IRB Number_________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

SignatureToday's Date

After reading the guidelines, please sign and return this form to the Research Coordinator in SEA 4.212 for researcher access to the Sona system.

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