

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 and Disclosure: <https://research.utexas.edu/ors/human-subjects/training/>. Individual SONA logins are required for all researchers requesting access to the subject pool.
- B. Main experimenters: Please add research staff to your approved protocol using the Research Personnel for Amendment Application: <https://research.utexas.edu/ors/human-subjects/irb-forms/>. When the amendment has been approved, please ask new research staff to review the SONA Experimenter Guidelines and notify the research coordinator with the approved researcher's name, UT EID, email address, and the related IRB protocol (Experimenter Briefing Verification form). A Researcher account will be created in SONA and login information will be emailed.

II. Experiment Approval

- A. Main experimenters: Please visit <https://research.utexas.edu/ors/human-subjects/> 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 chair (DRC) for review, and then formally submitted to the IRB for review and approval.
- B. Your study needs to be approved by your faculty sponsor, 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 can reach out to 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). You can also watch tutorials on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec8S3xfO-a8>.
- D. After your experiment has been approved, each researcher that works with human subjects or identifiable data 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. Or email the info requested to psyresearch@austin.utexas.edu.

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 PI and 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 schedule an appointment with the research coordinator to go over instructions on how to properly create and manage experiment sessions in the system. Or read through the manual or video tutorials.*
- C. Please accurately advertise your experiment. If possible, please use the IRB-approved study title for the “Study Name.” A “creative” title is also fine if followed by a “qualifier” (for example: “Fight Club: Computer Learning”). Please include the study purpose under “Abstract” and a description of what students will be expected to do in the lab under “Description.” Please also review that credit hours directly reflect the amount of time students will participate (1 credit = 1 hour). Each experiment within a lab should have a unique posting. **Experiment postings that do not follow these rules will be removed from the system.**
- D. SONA experiment posts must be approved by the PI and 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. IRB protocols with active amendments can continue to conduct experiments using IRB-approved methods, with new procedures only being permitted after the amendment approval. To expedite review when requesting study approval, please include text outlining any changes made to the study. You can also send an email 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, and you are approved to recruit minors, you need to confirm that the student has an Experimental Permission Form on file. Additionally, each lab approved to recruit minors must provide their own parental permission and assent forms that the participant will complete at the beginning of the study. **If a participant is not yet 18 years of age, please excuse them from the experiment.** Direct them to visit the research coordinator in SEA 4.212 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 IRB-approved 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 multiple session study (i.e. 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 and will need to complete the research paper to complete their research requirement.
- 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 and Emailing Participants

- 1) Experimenters are not permitted to call or e-mail subject pool participants to solicit their participation in an experiment without IRB-approved text and 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—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 Sessions

You may cancel an experiment session only when it is impossible for you or another lab member to keep the appointment or if it has been determined that a student is ineligible to participate. Please

attempt to notify your main experimenter or a co-researcher and request that they meet the participant and run the experiment. If this is not possible, subjects who signed up to participate in the cancelled session should 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 and 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.

Please keep cancellations to a minimum. If at all possible, students should be rescheduled. If you must cancel a session, please be certain you are granting one hour of cancellation credit (please add “Cancellation Credit” under the “Comments” section and any other notes to explain the situation).

F. Psychology 301 Research Requirement

Please review the Psychology 301 portion of the website to familiarize yourself with the procedures the participants must follow: <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/psychology/undergraduate/Psychology-301/Intro%20Research%20Requirement.php>.

If further information is desired about research conducted by the members of the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, please contact:

<p>Eunjung Lee-Furman Research Coordinator Department of Psychology University of Texas at Austin SEAY Building 4.212 Austin, TX 78712 (512) 232-4269 PsyResearch@austin.utexas.edu</p>	<p>David Gilden Departmental Review Chair Department of Psychology University of Texas at Austin SEAY Building 5.118 Austin, TX 78712 (512) 471-6584 Gilden@utexas.edu</p>
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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 have been added to the research protocol and approved by the IRB to work with human subjects.

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 (_____) _____ - _____

UT EID _____

Faculty Sponsor (Which lab are you working in) _____

Main Experimenter (Typically a graduate student) _____

SONA Experiment Name _____

IRB Number _____

Signature

Today'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, or email the above information to psyresearch@austin.utexas.edu.