

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Participation in Psychological Research: Information for Students

As part of your psychology course, you are encouraged to participate in research projects conducted or supervised by the faculty of the department. The purpose of such participation is to give you some direct experience with real experiments and to give you a better idea of how the work of psychology is actually carried out. Participation is a course requirement for all sections of PSY 101.

SPECIAL NOTE: Students under 18 years of age may not participate in any HPR/SONA experiments. Special options have been created for students under 18 to meet the 7 hours of participation requirement for PSY101 courses. Please contact Audra Jeffrey (jeffre22@msu.edu) for more information.

Steps in Research Participation: Registering as a Participant

The purpose of this handout is to go over some of the things you will need to know before participating in psychological research. The first step is registering. This, like nearly all your scheduling activities, is handled through the Internet: <https://msu-psychology.sona-systems.com>. **If you have used SONA in a previous psychology class you do not need to set up another account but you do need to make sure you have the correct class listed for the current semester.**

Among other things you will be asked to select the course and section number to which you wish to have your participation hours credited. It is **critical** that you select the correct course and section number. If you select an incorrect course or section, the participation hours that you earn will not be relayed to the proper instructor and will not be counted in calculating your course grade. If you are enrolled in more than one participating class you will disperse the participation hours you earn between the classes. Hours do not carry over to the following semester. For example: You earn 10 Participation hours. You need 7 hours for one course and 5 hours for your second course. You can distribute the earned hours between the two classes and then continue to participate in the HPR/SONA research until you meet your requirement or extra participation hours.

Signing-up for research: You can sign up for experiments 24-hours a day on the Web site. For more information, please consult the document posted on D2L.

Canceling appointments: Experimenters have invested a great deal of time and money in preparing an experiment. This goes to waste if you fail to keep your appointment. In such cases, you can cancel your appointment 24 hours prior to the start time. If it is after the 24 hour deadline you need to e-mail the HPR student coordinator, Audra Jeffrey, (jeffre22@msu.edu).

Reporting for a research appointment: Please give yourself enough time to get to the building location and to find the appropriate room for the experiment. **Arriving 10 minutes before the experiment is scheduled to begin is suggested.** If you are late, you could find the experiment in progress and the door locked. On rare occasions, an experimenter may not make his/her appointment with you because of unusual circumstances (e.g., a car breakdown, a personal emergency). If this happens contact Audra Jeffrey, the HPR coordinator in Room 100, Psychology Building or email her at: jeffre22@msu.edu to report it (email is preferred).

Rights of Students Participating in Psychology Research

Participation must be voluntary/optional activities. First, it is Department, University, and Federal policy that no student be compelled in any way to participate in research. If you participate in research, it must be done voluntarily. Therefore, even in classes where research participation is required, students must be offered one or more alternative activities to meet their requirement. If you want to avail yourself of such an alternative activity, you may get information from your professor. Note that on rare occasions there are more people interested in participating in experiments than there are openings in the experiments. If this occurs this semester, additional alternative activities will be provided later in the semester.

Participation should be educational. Second, participating in research should be a learning experience for you. You have a right to obtain information about the experiments in which you serve as a participant. You are entitled to have your questions about the experiment answered. Also, at least five minutes of every experimental session must be devoted to teaching you something about the experiment. You are entitled to receive a written summary of the experiment, including the name and phone number of the person in charge of the experiment, whom you may contact if you have additional questions.

The right to discontinue participation: Third, the Department of Psychology is highly concerned that no study be conducted that would in any way be harmful to you. Even so, it is possible that in rare cases you will feel uncomfortable about participating in a study for which you have volunteered. Just remember, you always have the right to leave any experiment. You don't have to explain or justify why you want to leave, and you can never be penalized for leaving.

The right to receive participation hours: Finally, if you complete a study, you have a right to receive the participation hours you've earned. For example: Even if an experimenter has an equipment breakdown, you're still entitled to receive credit for the **time** you've spent in the study. Participation hours are not automatically awarded and it may take researchers a few days to record attendance. The HPR does not penalize participants for missing studies but we do appreciate being notified if you cannot make your session.

Reporting problems: If you ever encounter some problem or feel that your rights have been violated, we want to know about it. Problems you have will be handled by Audra Jeffrey, the HPR student coordinator, email address jeffre22@msu.edu or come to Room 100 Psychology Building. They will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken. You will need to know the name of the experiment and the date/time you signed up for.

Conclusions: We want to emphasize that negative experiences are very rare; most students who serve as participants in research at Michigan State find their participation interesting and enjoyable. When you serve as a participant in psychological research you're benefiting personally by learning more about what the science of psychology is really about, but you're also benefiting many others. Others like the psychologists who are working to get a better understanding of interesting and important behavioral questions. Others like people who will benefit when that knowledge is ultimately applied to everyday human problems like loneliness, depression, divorce, and self-development. And others like future generations of students. Who knows? Perhaps the research you participate in this semester will be featured in future psychology textbooks, just as some of the experiments you'll study this semester had their data supplied by previous generations of MSU students. We hope and expect that you'll put as much in and get as much out of research participation as they did.