Overview for Experimenters:

Washington University Psychology Department Subject Pool

Please keep this manual accessible in your laboratory for future reference

Revised September 2008

Please Read First

This guidebook contains a FAQ section at the beginning which may be helpful for many students as a quick look-up for a question you may have. This is then followed by a more in-depth description of these guidelines.

However, please make sure that you read the guidebook in its entirety before running any participants. These guidelines are important to ensure that you are in compliance with WU and HRPO-based rules and are specifically designed to make everything go smoothly. Please note that failure to adhere to these guidelines may, in some cases, potentially result in temporary suspension of access to the subject pool. If you have any questions please first ask your advisor/PI or someone else in your lab who is familiar with these guidelines. In most cases that person should be able to resolve the question. However, if they are not able to provide you with an answer, please contact Dr. Lambert at alambert@wustl.edu
Outline

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. I want to post an experiment on Experimetrix and I need a logon and password. How do I get that information?

When you received approval for this project from HRPO (Human Research Protection Office), they sent you a PDF document (with their stamp of approval) containing the informed consent, description of the study, and the debriefing. Simply forward that PDF, in its entirety, to Alan Lambert at alambert@wustl.edu and he will issue a logon and password in the next day or so.

In the body of your email to Dr. Lambert please make sure that you specify the faculty sponsor. Please note that this applies to all graduate students as well as postdocs, as all experiments must be linked to a particular member of the psychology department faculty.

2. Is there a limit on the amount of credit I can offer per hour? What about payment?

For one hour of participation, researchers can offer up to one (1) credit or 10 dollars.

3. Can offer credit or payment?

Yes. However, any given student can receive either credit or pay, but not both.

If you are offering ONLY credit, or ONLY payment, please make that clear in your header.

4. I need to cancel an experiment. How do I do that?

See page 13 of the subject pool guidelines, below. Please note that there are different procedures depending on whether you are canceling 24 hours ahead of time or not.

5. What happens if I forget to cancel the study altogether, the student shows up anyway, and finds that there was no experimenter at my lab? What would I do?

You should avoid these sorts of events at all costs. This has the potential to foster resentment among our students. After all, students are penalized for not showing up, and it is reasonable for them to expect that someone will be there when they arrive. If this happens, please email Dr. Lambert and he will take it from there. Please note that there are stiff penalties for labs that have multiple experimenter no-shows and this may involve temporary suspension of access to the subject pool not only for your project, but other projects in the lab too.
6. I am running a minimal risk study with no age restrictions. What should I do if an underage (< 18) student shows up for my study?

This is a bit complicated; please make sure that you read p. 15 of the guidelines below, BEFORE you start your study.

7. I clearly specified “18 or older” in my header but an underage student showed up anyway. What do I do?

You politely tell them sorry, that you cannot run them, and they do not credit or payment for showing up. As long as this was clearly specified in the header, it is the student’s responsibility to read it.
General issues

As experimenters, our needs are always secondary with the need to:

- respect participants' rights
- comply with guidelines of the IRB and the subject pool committee (e.g. educational benefit, avoid coercion)

Your opportunity to collect data from participants, and to use the subject pool, is a privilege, not a right.

We want to hear from you: questions/concerns about policies are encouraged.
Protecting Participants Rights

Question: Under what circumstances should I give full credit to participants who wish to discontinue experiment?

Answer: All circumstances.

One of the golden rules of informed consent is that as soon as the participant walks in your lab door, he or she has the right to discontinue participation in your study at any time, and for any reason. In such cases the participant must be given full credit.

Essential ingredients to all experiments:

- Written informed consent
- Written debriefing

Report all unusual incidents to your faculty supervisor immediately.

In general, give participants the benefit of the doubt. Participants are not here to "serve your needs".
Obtaining logons and passwords

(Revised 2008)

HiISC has largely switched over to the internet for many aspects of the review process, including notification that your experiment has been approved. Such notification typically arrives in the form of a PDF which contain the stamp of approval and the date of expiration. Here is one example (I have omitted some pages here.)

To obtain a logon and password, simply forward the entire PDF to Alan Lambert (alambert@artsci.wustl.edu). Please make sure that the PDF also includes a debriefing (see next page). If it does not, please include one as a separate attachment. I will then email you back with the logon and password within a day or so.

EXCEPTION: IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE NOTIFICATION FROM HRPO VIA EMAIL (AND HENCE DO NOT HAVE APPROVAL IN PDF FORM), JUST LEAVE THE FORMS IN MY MAILBOX.

HOWEVER, PLEASE DO LET ME KNOW IF THIS IS THE CASE.

ASIDE FROM THAT CASE, PLEASE SUBMIT ALL REQUESTS VIA EMAIL.
What are we trying to learn in this research?

This study intends to investigate the psychological mechanisms involved in cognitive control. We want to examine the mechanisms of incentive motivation on preparatory control and whether motivation induces differential reactive or proactive control processes. In other words, how does reactive or proactive control help us prepare for our motivated goals? By having participants perform face/word task switching and manipulating stimulus cues between reward/no reward cues, we hope to discover variations in cognitive control mechanisms according to whether a motivator is present or not.

Why is this study important to the general public?

Cognitive control processes are thought to be important in enabling the flexibility, complexity, and sophistication of human cognition across a wide range of domains, including attention, working memory, episodic memory, and decision making. Cued task-switching paradigms have become popular in both the behavioral and neuroimaging literatures as a means of investigating mechanisms of cognitive control (Schaefer, 2006). Using a common set of task paradigms, we hope to learn more about these mechanisms of cognitive control in terms of behavioral measures and as a function of both individual differences and age-related changes.

Where can I learn more?


What if I have questions later?

If you have any questions, reactions, or concerns regarding this experiment that you would like to share with us, whether they are about the content of the experiment or how the testing was administered, please contact us either by phone or e-mail: Adam Savine (935-8547), Todd Braver (935-5143, tbraver@artscl.wustl.edu). We will do our best to answer any questions or concerns to your satisfaction.

Final caution and request

As you can imagine, if our hypotheses were known to participants before they had finished their participation, their data would be less informative as to the utility of the hypotheses. So, we ask that you do not give out this sheet or share its contents with any other students (even in later semesters).
Posting on the Web

Faculty member must always be listed as supervisor.

Please be honest when determining number of credits to be offered.

Set credits by modal, not maximum, amount of time taken to actually complete your task. If a minority of participants run over, give them additional credit, manually. Such after-the-fact adjustments can only be done upwards, not downwards.

Header: “Joe Friday rule” Just the facts.

Excluding participants on basis of language requirements (e.g. “native English speakers only”) should only be used under the most special circumstances, such as speeded tasks involving lexical decisions. If you are not sure, please consult with the subject pool committee.

Excluding people because a certain percentage of “them” might give you “messier results”, or because a higher percentage of “them” might not understand your instructions, is not a legitimate reason.
Experiments can offer up to $10/hour. No exceptions.

Limits on Payment
Importance of Showing Up

As experimenter, it is your responsibility to show up, on time, for your own experiment. If you need to cancel an experimental session, you must do so one full day ahead of time. (see next screen for details.)

Please note new policy on no-shows (cases in which the participant arrives on time, but the experimenter simply fails to show up, without properly canceling on time.)

First experimenter no-show in any given semester: subject pool committee will issue a warning.

Second no show: Automatic suspension of access to the pool for two weeks. Faculty lab is the unit of analysis.

Additional no-shows per semester will result in cumulative penalties.
How to Cancel an Experimental Session (revised Fall 2008)

Are you canceling at least 24 hours ahead of time?

YES

Cancel session on website

Students automatically receive cancellation notice from Experimetrix

If participants show up anyway, they do not get credit.

Please do not ask or imply that participants should sign up again for your study to get credit. They can sign up for any study, not just yours.

NO

Before canceling, manually record name AND email of any students who have signed up for that session

Cancel session on website

If the student doesn’t show up, they do not get credit of course.

However, if the student DOES show up you must manually issue them full credit for your study (through website). You have automatically forfeited your opportunity to collect data from these participants for this study either now, or anytime in the future. This is true even if participants appear willing to do so. This policy constitutes a minor penalty to you for failing to cancel in time. After issuing them credit please email the student explaining that you have issued credit. Again, this all presumes that they physically showed up. If they didn’t show up, no credit.
What to do, and what not to do, when the going gets tough (scarce participants).

1. Consider paying participants if funds are available.

2. Try to plan ahead better the next time. Fall is much better than the Spring to run experiments.

3. Out of fairness to other experimenters, please do not attempt to “beat the system” by:
   
a. issuing informal requests or “spreading the word” in classes that your study is “especially interesting” or that your friends should sign up for your study.

b. approaching lecturers in or outside of our department to have them distribute your questionnaires in class. We realize that having students complete your questionnaire in class is a very tempting way to complete your study, but this is patently unfair to other experimenters. DO NOT APPROACH INSTRUCTORS TO HELP OUT YOUR STUDY FOR ANY REASON.
Who may issue credit

Undergraduate RAs can post experiments and run sessions, but they should not give credits to participants-please leave this duty for post-docs, graduate students, staff, or faculty.
Studies that can be offered for credit or payment

Any “minimal risk” study approved by the HHSC can be offered for credit or payment.

Nearly all experiments conducted by the psychology department are minimal risk. Many of these studies involve traditional laboratory procedures (e.g. questionnaires, reaction time studies) but can also include studies involving fMRI or other medical procedures, although these are less common. As long as the study is approved at minimal risk, it can be posted for credit or payment.

As for studies approved at greater-than-minimal risk:

These studies cannot be offered for credit but in many cases they can be offered for payment. However, you should double check with the HHSC for any special guidelines that may pertain to that particular study. See also issues on the next page regarding underage participants.
Underage participants (under 18)

Whenever a student arrives to participate in your study, you should ask for his/her year in school, and then, if s/he is a first-year student, the experimenter should ask the potential participant's his/her age. This should be a relatively rare event, but if the student is a minor (under 18), special procedures need to be followed to protect their rights. However, different procedures apply depending on whether the study is more than minimal or not.

1. If the study is more than minimal risk

Per HHSC regulations, minors (i.e., persons under 18) should not be signing up for your study in the first place. Such indication should have already been provided in your experimenter header (e.g. "no one under 18"). If the student didn’t see this warning, and they show up anyway, politely inform them of the situation and explain why they can’t receive credit or pay.

2. Minimal risk studies

Due to Federal regulations designed to protect the rights of human subjects, no data can be collected from the individual for RESEARCH purposes without advanced parental consent, even for minimal risk research. Thus, if you want to collect data as part of your research, you would need to obtain written informed consent, in advance, from both parents. This can be done via fax or by regular mail, but as a practical matter, this is virtually impossible in most cases. (If you wish to pursue that route, please check with the HHSC office first.)

However, as an alternative, it is permissible to have the person participate in your study as part of an educational experience (which it should be anyway, for everyone) but for legal reasons you cannot collect (retain) data from them as part of your research.

Thus, you should follow this procedure:

a. Before they begin, verbally explain the study in such a way so as to reasonably parallel the information contained in the informed consent. (Again, this is a minimal risk study and so the issue of informing them of tangible risk is moot.) However, the student should not sign the informed consent document.

b. Have them participate in the study as usual, and then debrief as usual.

c. Once the participant leaves, you should destroy any data collected. If you ran your study on a PC, and you can set your program for “demo” mode, then this point is moot since no data is collected in the first place.
Contact Information

Technical issues on using the website (e.g. how to issue credit, etc): Please email the webmaster (Laura Nesse) PsychE@artsci.wustl.edu

For policy questions: Email the subject pool chair: Alan Lambert (alambert@artsci.wustl.edu)