

Reed College Psychology Department
Guidelines for obtaining consent and maintaining data confidentiality

I. Obtaining consent

Consent can be obtained:

1. by means of a signed written consent form
2. as an oral response to an orally delivered consent script
3. by the act of participating when the consent elements have been presented (usually in written form) and participants can easily (and without penalty) decline to participate. For example, the consent elements can appear at the beginning of a survey, and participants can decline to participate by not returning the survey or by handing in a blank survey. Or the fact that observational data will be collected during a meeting can be explained in advance and individuals can choose not to attend the meeting. This method may be preferable when collecting data on sensitive topics.

In all these cases, the information that must be presented to the participant is similar to that presented in a written consent document, described below.

General considerations:

1. A consent form/script should be written using language that is as simple and direct as possible.
2. When constructing consent forms/scripts for special populations (e.g., children, individuals with limited ability in English or other difficulties understanding language), special care must be taken to ensure that the consent process is understood completely. It may be appropriate to have the consent form/script translated into another language or read aloud.
3. A consent document is addressed to the participant, i.e., the participant is referred to as “you” and the investigator(s) is/are referred to as “I/we.”

ELEMENTS OF A CONSENT DOCUMENT

A. Introduction to the project

1. The opening section of a written consent form generally identifies the researcher and his or her institutional affiliation.
2. It then briefly describes the purpose of the project, usually in general terms. Although it is advisable to be as honest as possible in describing the purpose of the project, in many psychology projects, the purpose is not fully explained. As long as the description of purpose is accurate, this is not considered deception. In some cases, however, the purpose of the project is misidentified. This is considered to be a deception and, as such, must both be justified and explicitly corrected in the debriefing phase of the project.

3. In some cases it may also be appropriate, in this first section, to indicate why the participant has been invited to participate.

B. Procedures

This section provides a description of what the participant will be asked to do. The goal is to provide enough information that the potential participant can decide whether they want to participate. Too detailed a description is likely to be confusing, but the description must include enough information to make consent meaningful. The description should include an indication of the expected time commitment and any information about locale or other conditions that might influence the participant's willingness to participate. Incentives (rewards) provided for participation are usually described in this section, as well.

C. Risks and Discomforts

This section contains a description of any foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participant and how these may be handled. In most psychology experiments, the bulk of this section consists of assurances regarding confidentiality, especially if the content of the interview or assessments are in any sense "personal" or "sensitive" (see following section on data confidentiality). If records identifying the participant, or from which the participant can be identified, will be maintained, the procedures to be followed to maximize confidentiality are described. If specific risks associated with breach of confidentiality exist, these may need to be mentioned explicitly.

C. Benefits

Unlike medical or clinically-oriented studies, most academic psychology projects promise no direct benefit to the participants. If the participants are not expecting any benefits, this section can be omitted. Description of the information to be gained is often incorporated into the introductory description of the purpose of the project.

D. Assurance of voluntary nature of consent

This critical section emphasizes that participation is voluntary, that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled, and that the participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.

E. Contact information for questions or concerns

A description of whom to contact for pertinent questions about the research (generally the primary investigator) is provided, as is contact information for the Reed College Human Subjects Research Committee (currently: Kathy Oleson, Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Research Committee, 503-517-7498). For senior theses, contact information for the thesis supervisor is usually provided, and for class projects, contact information for the class instructor must be provided.

F. Authorization.

In the final section of a written consent form, the participant is notified that they will receive a copy of the consent form. When appropriate, the participant is also notified that

in signing the consent form, they affirm that they are at least 18 years old (as younger individuals are not legally allowed to provide consent). A space is then provided for the participant's signature.

A consent process checklist and several sample participant consent forms, including a set of parental consent/child assent forms and an oral consent script, are provided below.

II. Maintaining confidentiality

It is often the case that information collected in a study are not anonymous, even if the participant's name is not associated directly with the information. For example, when interviews are audio- or video-taped, it is usually possible to identify the person being interviewed from these records. In addition, when the size and/or composition of the participant pool is limited, individual participants may be identifiable by unique patterns of demographic or other information collected as part of an interview or survey. Finally, the information is not anonymous if it can be connected to the participant's name via a coding system (e.g., a code on the interview or survey data matching a code on a signed consent form or on a master sheet containing contact information for the participants).

If the information is not anonymous and includes anything the participant might consider "sensitive" or "personal," procedural steps must be taken to ensure that the information remains **confidential**. Procedures for maintaining confidentiality should be described in detail in the consent form or script. Such procedures include:

- Assurance that links between the information and the participants' identities will be time-limited. For example, signed consent forms may be immediately separated from the information provided by the participant and stored in a separate location. Tape recordings may be immediately transcribed and destroyed. Coded master sheets containing participant contact information may be destroyed as soon as a specified period in which future contact might be made has expired.
- Descriptions of how and where the information provided by the participants and any other pertinent records (e.g., signed consent forms, master coding sheets) will be stored
- Assurance that all reports based on the information provided will be made in such a way that individual participants cannot be identified. In the case of interview data (or data obtained in open-ended questionnaires), procedures for handling direct quotes should be specified.
- Where appropriate (and possible), assurance that the information provided by the individual (including, in some cases whether an individual participated or declined to participate) will not be shared with other individuals or with organizations in whose hands the relevant knowledge might affect the participant's status or well-being.

Even the best confidentiality procedures can fail, leading to the unintended disclosure of participant information and identity. Thus:

- information should be truly anonymous whenever possible
- procedures for ensuring confidentiality should be well thought through and followed rigorously
- as a part of the consent process, participants should be fully informed of the confidentiality procedures and of any remaining risks

CONSENT PROCESS CHECKLIST

_____ The name of the researcher and his or her affiliation.

_____ The purpose of the study.

_____ Description of what is expected of the participant, including expected duration of participation

_____ Potential risks and discomforts

_____ The extent to which confidentiality can be maintained, and the procedures for doing so

_____ A statement indicating that participation is voluntary

_____ the individual may decline to participate

_____ the participant may refuse to answer questions

_____ the participant may withdraw at any time without penalty

_____ An offer to answer questions

_____ Contact information for researcher and for the HSRC. Contact information for the thesis advisor can also be included.

_____ When appropriate, a statement that the participant will receive a copy of the form.

_____ When appropriate, a statement such as: "In signing below, I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older."

_____ When appropriate, signatures of participant and investigator.

Generic Reed College Consent to Participate in Research
[Experiment Descriptor]

This is a senior thesis study conducted by NAME. I am studying [description]. You will be asked to [describe important parts of procedure]. Your participation will require [approximately 30 minutes]. You will earn [a psychology lottery ticket] for participating.

[If there are any risks involved in participating in the study, describe here.]

The data collected in this experiment will be anonymous. Your name will not be stored with the data, and this consent form will be stored separately from your data. Reports of this experiment will not include individual data in a form by which you could be identified. [Note: this paragraph may take a number of different forms, depending on the study. See section on maintaining confidentiality.]

Optional: If successful, this study may contribute to our understanding of [topic]. [If there are any direct benefits, other than the incentive, to the participant, describe here or after the paragraph on confidentiality.]

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer individual questions or to engage in individual activities. You may also discontinue all participation in this study at any time without losing [the lottery ticket incentive].

I will be glad to answer any questions about the procedures of this study. Answers to questions on topics that might influence the outcome of the study may be deferred until the end of the session, when I will explain the purpose of the study in more detail. I can be contacted at [address].

Concerns about any aspect of this study may be referred to Professor NAME, thesis advisor, e-mail, 503-517-***, or to the Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Research Committee, Professor NAME, EMAIL, PHONE.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. In signing this form, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

signature of participant

date

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant

signature of investigator

date

Participant Consent Form
Study of Story Perception

This thesis project, being conducted by NAME, is a study about the understanding of stories presented in different formats. You will be asked to view and interpret several short stories presented as text, as a series of pictures, or as a series of combined pictures and text. Some of the images and/or text may depict violent or sexually explicit activities or contain potentially offensive language.

These tasks will take approximately 45 minutes. You will receive a home-baked delicacy for participating in this study, as well as a psychology lottery ticket.

Your data will be stored with a code number from which you cannot be personally identified. This consent form will be stored separately, and not cross-coded with your data. Thus, your data will be anonymous. Data gathered in this study will be reported only in terms of averaged group scores.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions during the session, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw, you will still receive the food and lottery ticket.

The investigator, NAME AND CONTACT INFO, will be glad to answer your questions about this study. Concerns about any aspect of this study also may be referred to NAME, thesis advisor, (CONTACT INFO) or to NAME, Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Committee, PHONE, EMAIL.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study, and in signing below, affirm that I am at least 18 years old. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

signature of participant

date

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant.

signature of investigator

date

Participant Consent Form Study of Group Perception

I, NAME, am interested in understanding the effects of group identity on the perceptions of group members and on the ability of groups to work as teams. My study involves two phases: an initial phase in which I will ask you to fill out a series of questionnaires that will require approximately 25 minutes of your time. You will receive a psychology lottery ticket for filling out these questionnaires.

On the basis of your answers on the first questionnaires, you might then be invited to participate in the second phase of the study. This phase involves a 75-minute session in which groups of students are asked to work together for about an hour to solve a set of problems. At the end of the hour, I will show a set of videotapes of groups working together and ask you to answer a series of questions about how the group in the videotape is functioning and about individual members of the group in the videotape. None of the group members in these videotapes will be individuals known to you. The ratings should take about 10 minutes. You will be paid \$8 for your participation in this session.

The questionnaires will be separated from this consent form, and the consent form will be stored in a separate locked location from the questionnaires. You will be assigned a file code number that will appear on your questionnaires. A sheet on which your code number and contact information are paired will be used only for the purpose of scheduling the second session. After the second session (or after the first session if you are not invited to or decline to participate in the second session), this sheet will be destroyed. In these ways, the anonymity of all your questionnaire data will be ensured. Reports of data from this study will include only data averaged across participants.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions or to engage in any procedure, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without losing the incentive that has been offered for participation in the session from which you withdraw.

The investigator, NAME AND CONTACT INFO, will be available to answer your questions about the procedures of this study. Questions that may influence the outcome of the study may be deferred until the end of the second session. Concerns about any aspect of this study may be referred to Professor NAME, Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Committee, PHONE, EMAIL or to my thesis advisor, Professor NAME, PHONE, EMAIL.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study, and in signing below, affirm that I am at least 18 years old. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

signature of participant

date

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant.

signature of investigator

date

Participant Consent Script – Oral

This is a study about sexual orientation being conducted as a class project by NAME. It will be in three parts. The first part is a questionnaire about your attitudes towards gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The second part is a short task on the computer that involves categorizing words and images. The third part is a questionnaire about your sexual identity and practices. It should take about 30-40 minutes to finish all three parts. In return for being in the study, you will receive a psychology lottery ticket.

All your responses will be anonymous. Your name will not be written down anywhere. I will link your questionnaires and computer task with one another by means of a code of letters and numbers that you will generate yourself. I'll be in another room the whole time you fill out the questionnaires and do the computer task. When you're done, please fold your questionnaires in half and staple them. Then put them in this big box over here (point to box). I won't look at any of your answers until I've had a lot of people come in and fill these out, because I want to protect your anonymity. The only people who will look at your answers will be my advisor and I, and in any presentation I might make, I'll only report data in terms of group scores.

You don't have to answer any question that you don't want to answer for any reason. You can also withdraw from the study at any time and you'll still receive the lottery ticket.

If you have any questions during the study about what something means, I'll be happy to answer them. I can't tell you anything in advance that might influence your answers on the questionnaires, but I will be happy to discuss any questions or thoughts that you might have afterwards. If you have any questions or concerns you would like to bring up after the study is over, feel free to contact me, my advisor NAME, or the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee, NAME. Their names, emails and numbers are on this written summary of what I've just told you, which is yours to keep.

Do you have any questions?

Before we proceed, I need to confirm that you are at least 18 years old?

Do you want to participate in the study that I have described?

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Smoking Among College Students Reed College

Invitation to Participate and Description of Project

You are invited to participate in a study designed to gather information about smoking among college students at Reed College. The results of the study will be used to better understand smoking and to help college students who choose to quit smoking. You have been invited to participate because you are a college student at Reed and because you have indicated that you currently smoke cigarettes. Your participation in this study will last up to three months, and it will require approximately 30-75 minutes of your time.

In order to decide whether to participate in this study, you should know enough about the risks and benefits to make an informed decision. This consent form gives you detailed information about the study which a member of the research team will discuss with you. Once you understand the study, you will be asked if you wish to participate, and, if you do, you will be asked to sign this form.

Description of the Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete questionnaires about your smoking and other drug use and about your mood. These questionnaires are expected to take approximately 10 minutes of your time. In addition you may be asked to speak to a health care professional for approximately 45 minutes about your smoking behavior and beliefs. During this meeting, you may be asked to complete a lung function test which involves breathing into a tube for about 15 seconds. Four weeks after and again three months after your initial visit, we will ask you to complete a follow-up questionnaire that should again take about 10 minutes to complete.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are no risks or discomforts anticipated for persons who volunteer to take part in this study. In the unlikely event that you experience any discomfort from your participation, you may discuss this with the health care professional who may meet with you, or you may contact PROFESSOR, Thesis Advisor, at PHONE.

One potential benefit of this study is that you may quit smoking should you choose to do so. However, you also may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. The results will be used to help other college students who choose to quit smoking.

Economic Considerations

If you choose to participate in this study you will receive one or two psychology lottery tickets after completing the initial session and questionnaires. You will then receive \$5 for completing each follow-up interview.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be strictly confidential. A file number will be assigned to all the information you provide in this study so that your rights to privacy and

Instructions for Questionnaire Packet & Agreement to Participate

This is a packet of questionnaires examining students' current personal and social opinions, as part of a survey being conducted by ***s Social Psychology course. These questions include students' attitudes and perceptions about a range of topics, including academics, their day to day life at Reed, religion, sex, their general satisfaction with Reed, and the honor principle. When completing the packet, we ask you to read each of the sections of the questionnaire carefully, and please answer honestly--there are no right or wrong answers. We want to understand how the Reed student body really thinks about these issues. The questionnaire is expected to take 20 - 25 minutes to complete & you will receive a full-size candy bar for your participation.

You will not put your name on the survey, so your anonymity is ensured. We will check off your name from a list of all current students to ensure that all participants are current student and that they only complete the survey once. This list will be destroyed at the end of the day when we are done having students complete the surveys. Any reports of the results of this study will only present data averaged across participants.

It is important that you fill out as many of these questions as possible, but feel free to leave any questions blank that you do not feel comfortable answering. You will still receive a candy bar even if you do not complete all questions.

Feel free to ask any questions of the students conducting the survey or of Professor ***, (503) 517 – ****. Concerns about any aspect of this study may be referred to Professor NAME, Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Research Committee, PHONE, EMAIL.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Assuming that you agree to participate in this survey, then complete the following survey. When you are done completing the survey or if you do not agree to participate, then place this survey in the box labeled "Social Psychology Survey."

Work at your own pace. Thank you for your participation.

SOLICITATION LETTER TO PARENTS OF POTENTIAL CHILD PARTICIPANTS

DATE

Dear Parent:

My name is NAME and I am a professor/student at Reed College. I am currently studying the effects of different types of feedback on children's motivation. My hope is that this research will be useful to teachers and parents who want to increase students' learning and interest in academic tasks. I am writing to describe this research and to invite you to give permission for your child to participate in a one-time 45-minute session.

The study will take place this summer at Reed College at a time that is convenient for you and your child. In this session, children will complete several interesting academic puzzles and will be given positive feedback about their performance, which will highlight either personal task mastery or excellence relative to others. Children will be asked opinion questions about their motivation for the puzzles and for school more generally. In some versions of the study, children will be given additional feedback that they have performed at a high level on another task, and that same-aged peers have also performed at a high level. Although the entire session will be videotaped for later analysis, children will not be informed of this until after they have finished participating. This is necessary because, when children know they are being videotaped, they often vary their natural behavior. Children will be fully debriefed about the procedures and purposes of the study at the end of the session.

As a token of our appreciation, children will be invited to pick out a gift certificate worth \$10 (for use at local stores, such as the Lloyd Center, Clackamas Town Center, Blockbuster Video, Toys 'R' Us), and will also be given a small Reed College school supply, such as a pencil or a folder. I have attempted to make this session as fun, interesting, and comfortable as possible for children. In previous similar studies that I have conducted, children have reported enjoying their participation because they think the tasks are fun, they get to share their opinions with others, and they learn about research in psychology. I also anticipate that children will enjoy visiting the Reed campus.

It is important to emphasize that my particular interest is in how children *in general* interpret feedback; I am not interested in your individual child's performance, but rather the performance and opinions of groups of children on average. Further, all responses of individual students will be kept strictly confidential. Coded numbers rather than student names will appear on the questionnaires and videotapes, and all data will be stored in a locked cabinet.

Participation in this study is voluntary, you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time without consequences, and your child can refuse to answer particular questions and/or discontinue his or her participation at any point during the course of the study with no negative consequences. Your permission in no way obligates your child to participate in the study if s/he is unwilling.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, please sign and have your child return the attached permission slip to his or her teacher as soon as possible. Either I or the project coordinator, NAME, will contact you at the beginning of the summer to arrange a convenient time for your child to come to Reed College. Once your child arrives at Reed, s/he will subsequently be asked if s/he would like to participate. If so, s/he will be asked to sign a separate consent form. *Please keep this letter in a secure location to ensure that certain information about the study is protected until after your child has completed the study.*

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me for further information or clarification at 503-517-****. I would be happy to talk with you! You may also contact Professor NAME, Chair of the Reed College Human Subjects Committee at PHONE, EMAIL. Please remember that the success of this study rests on children not knowing the goals of the study in advance. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

PARENT CONSENT FORM

PLEASE ONLY RETURN THIS PAGE
KEEP THE LETTER FOR YOUR INFORMATION

My signature indicates that **I AGREE** to allow my child to participate in the research study of Professor *** previously described.

Child's Name _____

Child's Teacher _____

Child's Date of Birth _____

Parents' Names _____

Family Address _____

Telephone Number _____

To schedule the summer session,
what would be the best time of
day for us to call you?

PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Thank you very much!

CHILD ASSENT FORM

- We would like you to be in our research project about the kinds of learning situations that make students interested in school. Your parents have already said that it would be fine for you to participate, but we want to make sure that you would like to be in the project.
- If you agree to be in this project, you will work on a few different kinds of puzzles, and we will ask you your opinions and feelings about the puzzles. We will also ask you some questions about what you think about regular school activities. These are all “opinion questions” and there are no right or wrong answers. The whole project will take about 45 minutes and you will get to pick out a gift certificate worth \$10 to use at local stores (for example, Clackamas Town Center, Lloyd Center, Blockbuster Video, Toys ‘R’ Us).
- Everything you work on today will be kept confidential. This means that we will not tell anyone else what you think about the project. We won’t tell your teachers, parents, or friends, even if they ask us to. We will write a code number, not your name, on all the questionnaire forms and everything that you work on today.
- Remember, being in this project is your choice. No one will be upset if you don’t want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop in the middle. No matter what, you will still get the gift certificate. If you want to skip a question, that’s alright too. Just say, “I don’t want to answer that question.”
- You can ask any questions you have about the project now or at any time. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this project.

(Print Name of Student)

(Signature of Student)

(Date)

Release to show Videotape for teaching purposes

Parent Consent:

I give permission for the videotape of my child's session to be shown in the college classroom for instructional purposes. I understand that this tape will NOT be shown outside of a research or teaching setting. The videocassette will be stored in a locked cabinet and labeled with a code number so that my child's identity will not be connected with the videotape in any way.

Parent's Signature

Date

Child's Name (Please Print)

Child Consent:

Can we show your videotape to college students to help them learn about children and motivation? Nobody who watches the tape will be told your name or what school you go to. This is your choice, and it is fine if you don't want us to show your tape to college students.

Can we show your tape? Please circle your choice: **YES** **NO**

Student's signature