RESEARCH REQUIREMENT FOR
INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

All students taking their first university course in psychology should gain some knowledge about how psychological studies are conducted. In order to obtain this knowledge, students learn basic information about research in lecture and in addition must also complete a research requirement. This requirement consists of two hours of research participation or 4 research credits (with each half hour of participation earning one credit).

Most students fulfill their research requirement by participating in psychological studies (Option 1, below). However, other options - such as reading research articles and writing brief summary reports (Option 2, below) - are available. Students are free to combine options in any way they desire to meet their requirement (e.g., 1 hour of Option 1, 1 hour of Option 2).

The research requirement must be completed by the end of the term. A student who does not complete the requirement receives a grade of "Incomplete" in the course. The student will be able to remove the "Incomplete" only by fulfilling the research requirement during the following term. Note that an Incomplete automatically turns into an F at the end of the term following the term for which it is received.

We hope you will find your research experience to be interesting and informative. The different options and procedures for fulfilling the research requirement are described below.

OPTION 1: PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDIES

One way to satisfy the research requirement is to volunteer to participate in a research study. Typically, a wide variety of studies are available to students each term. By serving as a participant, you earn credit toward your Introductory Psychology research requirement.

I. How to Volunteer

There are two ways to volunteer for participation in research studies: (1) by completing screening questionnaires at the beginning of the term, or (2) by signing up for a study through the Psychology Department’s online SONA Psychological Research System.

A. Completion of Screening Questionnaires

Some studies require certain types of participants (e.g., those with a unique medical history or a specific personality trait). To identify individuals who are eligible for these studies, the researchers may administer questionnaires in screening sessions during the first several weeks of the term. Completing the screening questionnaires may take one half-hour to an hour. Depending on how long it takes, you will earn 1-2 credits toward your research requirement.
On the questionnaires, you may be asked to provide your name, student ID number, telephone number, and other identifying information. This is so that you can receive proper credit for participation and also so that researchers may contact you (e.g., by phone or e-mail) and invite you to participate in their study. However, all of the information that you provide on the questionnaires is kept confidential from anyone who is not directly involved in the research.

If you are contacted to participate in a study, the researcher will give you the study number and ask you to go onto the SONA system to sign up at a convenient time. He or she may also give you a “password” for the study, which is designed to ensure that only eligible students sign up. Do not share this password with other students – if they sign up for a study for which they are ineligible they will not receive research credit and will inconvenience both themselves and the researcher. *Note that completion of screening questionnaires does not obligate you to participate in any further research that is related to those questionnaires.*

If you are contacted to sign up for a particular study, be sure to make a note of the researcher’s name and the date, time, and location of your appointment.

**B. Sign up for Research Participation Through the SONA Research System**

You may also sign up for an experiment on your own, through the SONA Research System. To do this, first read carefully the SONA Psychological Research System User Guide for participants, which will be provided to you by your instructor. Follow the instructions in the Guide by setting up a participant account for yourself and signing up for studies that suit your schedule.

In considering studies, pay special attention to any *study restrictions*. You may be ineligible for some studies, such as those that require only males or only females. If you sign up for a study for which you are ineligible, you will not receive research credit. Also, be sure to note the study number and other study information, as this could save confusion later. You are allowed to sign up for a given experiment only once. If you find no available studies at the time you first check, check again later as the availability of studies changes across time.

When you sign up for a study, be sure to write down the following information:

1. The study number;
2. The faculty supervisor’s name;
3. The researcher’s name;
4. The date, time and place of your appointment;
5. Contact information that you can use to get in touch with the researcher if you need to cancel at the last minute (i.e., 24 hours or less in advance of your appointment).

**II. Once You Have Volunteered, What Happens Next?**

Regardless of whether you schedule an appointment in response to an investigator’s invitation (e.g., conveyed via phone) or schedule an appointment via the SONA system, there are certain procedures that you need to follow.
A. Keep Track of Your Appointments

Be sure to keep all this information in a place where you are likely to see it (e.g., an appointment book or scheduler).

B. Attend and Participate in the Study

In volunteering to participate in a study, you accept the responsibility of meeting the researcher at the specified time and place. Please do not be late, as this causes problems both for the researchers and for other students who are participating.

When you arrive for a study, you will be asked to confirm that you wish to participate. It is important that you understand that you are not required to participate in any study against your wishes. You are entitled to ask questions of the researcher and may discontinue your participation at any time. This is part of the process called informed consent.

When the study is finished, the researcher is obligated to explain the study and to answer any questions that you may have. Feel free to ask questions. Getting answers to your questions is a good way to learn about research, which is the principal goal of the research requirement.

C. Obtain and Retain Your Research Receipt

After you participate in a study, the researcher should give you a printed research receipt that includes information relevant to the study in which you participated. If the researcher does not give you the receipt, ask for one. This receipt will document your participation in the unlikely event that you do not receive research credit within the SONA system. Be sure to keep this receipt in a safe place until you have received your final course grade.

D. Do Not Discuss the Study with Other Students in Your Introductory Psychology Class

If they participate in the same study later on, such discussions could invalidate their participation.

E. What if You Must Miss an Appointment or Wish to Cancel?

If you need or wish to cancel an appointment for research participation, please do so at least 24 hours prior to the appointment time. During this time, you can cancel your participation appointment through the SONA system.

If an emergency arises within the 24 hours prior to your appointment, contact the researcher as soon as possible, using the contact information that you recorded when you scheduled your appointment (see I.B.5, above). If you have difficulty contacting the researcher, call the Department of Psychology office at 934-3850 to leave a message for the researcher or faculty sponsor. Be prepared to give the study number, and the date and time of your appointment.
Please do not simply fail to show up at the scheduled time. Such “no-shows” inconvenience other students. In most cases, the time that you scheduled was removed from the list of available times during which other students could participate, and thus by signing up and not showing up you have needlessly limited their opportunities. Also, it’s very likely that another student is conducting the research and will have scheduled time away from other activities to come to the lab where the study is being done, set up for your participation, and wait for your arrival. Please be considerate of others by keeping track of your scheduled appointments for research participation and cancel your appointment in advance if you are no longer willing or able to participate in a study.

F. **What if the Researcher Does Not Show Up for the Appointment?**

We also ask researchers to respect your time by reliably showing up for scheduled appointments, but there are occasional emergencies and errors. If you think that the researcher has not shown up for an appointment, first double-check to make sure that you are in the correct location at the scheduled time. Please wait 15 minutes, during which time you should not leave the area, as the researcher might just be unavoidably delayed.

After 15 minutes have passed, you may leave. As soon as it is convenient to go on-line, verify your appointment date, time and meeting place on the SONA system or in any reminder e-mails that you received.

Assuming that you didn’t make an error, it is likely that the researcher will contact you within a few hours to explain their absence. If not, please contact Dr. Ed Cook, PY101 Research Participation Coordinator, at [ecook@uab.edu](mailto:ecook@uab.edu). If you attend an appointment as scheduled but the researcher does not, you will receive 1 credit toward your research requirement.

G. **If You Have Questions:**

Questions about the research requirement are best answered by your instructor or the teaching assistant. If you have questions about a particular study in which you are participating, ask the researcher, either in person during your appointment or via the contact information that you received. All other questions about research participation may be directed to Dr. Cook ([ecook@uab.edu](mailto:ecook@uab.edu)).

**OPTION 2 -- PREPARATION OF RESEARCH REPORTS**

A second option for satisfying the research requirement is (1) to read articles in which the results of psychological research are reported, and (2) to write a concise summary report of each article you read. The procedures to be followed are as follows.

1. Go to the reserve desk of Sterne Library. Listed under **Psychology 101, Research Requirement**, **Dr. McFarland** are notebooks from which you can select appropriate articles to read.
2. Choose an article to read from this group and read it. Then write a concise summary of the article. In the summary, give the complete reference for the article (author's name, title, journal, year, and page numbers) and then describe the contents of the article. You are encouraged to describe the basic point of view, the research methods used, the major points made, any weaknesses in the article that are apparent, and your personal reaction to the article's content. You should feel free to dispute the article's conclusions, approach, or importance of the message, if you desire.

3. Return the article to the reserve file from which it came. You may make a photocopy of the article if you desire, but do not attempt to take the library's copy out of the building.

4. Turn in your summary to your Introductory Psychology instructor. All research reports must be turned in one week prior to the last day of class. Although it is not required that your report be typewritten, it must be clearly legible for you to receive credit. There is no assigned length for these reports, but it is probably not possible to complete the assignment in less than 3 moderate-length paragraphs.

Your research summaries must contain your own descriptions and reactions. Plagiarism in this assignment, as in any other, is a violation of UAB's Academic Honor Code. In Psychology classes, such violations typically result in an F in the class and a letter to the Registrar that may result in expulsion from the university.

5. For each acceptable report you complete, you will receive one credit toward your research requirement. Thus, to satisfy the entire requirement with this option, you need to read 4 articles and write 4 reports.

COMPLETING THE REQUIREMENT AND EXTRA CREDIT

The above are options for completing the 4-credit research requirement. As mentioned above, all students who do not complete the requirement receive an "Incomplete" in PY101.

Some instructors give extra credit for participation beyond the 2-hour requirement. Check with your instructor for details about the amount of extra credit you may earn.

If you have any questions about the completion of the research requirement, please check with your Instructor or Teaching Assistant. If you have a question that they cannot answer, you may contact Dr. Cook (ecook@uab.edu).