

Guidance on consent

Gaining consent from research participants is important to ensure that you are ethical in your research practice. The type of consent or approval you need depends of the level of risk that the participant can incur while participating in your research.

Below are some recommendations that you can follow to help you through this process.

Seek permission first:

- Before diving into any form of research that includes gathering data from participants, make sure you seek permission first. For example, before conducting interviews, make sure participants understand what they are getting themselves into. This includes making sure that you articulate the purpose and potential outcomes of your research study.
- If your study involves working directly with individuals who are minors (anyone below 18) make sure you ask their parents or guardians before proceeding.

Give your participants an option to opt out:

- Always give potential participants the opportunity to opt out of the study at any point in the process. The last thing you want is for anyone to feel uncomfortable, as this could affect the results of the data being collected.

Participant safety is a priority

- Anytime you deal with human subjects at the center of your research, it's imperative that their safety comes first. For example, in case you use photo ethnography to gather imagery that could easily show the identity of your participants, blur their faces or make sure they sign a consent form allowing for you to use their faces.
- When conducting surveys or questionnaires, don't ask for any information that could be directly traceable to a particular individual. Don't ask for names or contact information, or, if you do, make sure it's optional.
- Always refer to research participants without using their real names. Use a prefix such as Subject A or Participant B.
- Store participant data in a secure, password-protected device and dispose of it properly when it is no longer needed.

Additional Resources:

Human Participant Studies - Risk Assessment Guide. Society for Science and the Public

<https://member.societyforscience.org/document.doc?id=40>

Please consult this guide, along with an IRB representative, to help you ensure you are seeking proper consent per risk involved.

Institutional review board (IRB)

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/assurances/irb/>

IRB is an independent ethics committee established to approve, monitor, and review behavioral research involving humans.

The IRB Forum

<http://www.irbforum.org>

Promotes the discussion of ethical, regulatory, and policy concerns with human subjects research.

CITI Training

<https://www.citiprogram.org/index.cfm?pageID=88>

CITI Program's HSR series covers the historical development of human subject protections, as well as current information on regulatory and ethical issues.