

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ACCESSING SONA SYSTEMS

I forgot my Sona Systems password. How do I find out what it is?

Go to <https://ecu.sona-systems.com/> and click on the Forgot Password link on right side of this login screen.

I forgot my Sona Systems username. How do I find out what it is?

Go to <https://ecu.sona-systems.com/> and click on the Forgot password link on right side of this login screen.

Immediately after I login to Sona Systems, as soon as I click on any menu option, I am taken back to the login page and I see a message that my authentication has expired. What does this mean?

Your web browser is not properly configured to accept cookies. You should turn on cookies in your web browser, use a different web browser (for example, try Firefox if you are currently using Internet Explorer), or try a different computer. Detailed instructions can be found at http://ecu.sona-systems.com/cookie_help.asp

What should I do if I am having a different problem accessing Sona Systems?

E-mail us at experimentrak@ecu.edu or stop by our office in Rawl 127.

SIGNING UP FOR RESEARCH STUDIES

When are research studies available to sign up for during the semester?

Researchers make their research studies available at different points across the semester based on when they are ready to conduct their studies. Researchers are ready to conduct their studies at different times, so when studies are available varies. Some researchers are ready to go at the start of the semester, some part of the way through the semester, and others at the end of the semester. Therefore, it is unpredictable. This is part of the reason for the following additional equitable opportunities for earning research credits:

- reading research articles and taking quizzes on those articles
- completing the start-of-the-semester survey
- taking a quiz based on a research study you participated in

If students wait until just before the mid-semester or end-of-the semester deadlines to earn research credits, there will not be enough opportunities to do so. We strongly recommend you attempt to earn research credits across the semester through completing a variety of options (participating in research studies, taking quizzes for research articles you read, taking quizzes for research studies you participated in).

What happens if I sign up for a research study I am not eligible for?

In order to receive research credit, you must be eligible for research studies you sign up for. That means you fit the specifications listed in the description on Sona Systems, you show up on time, you can stay for the full time specified, and you give the research study your full attention. You will not receive credit for research studies you are not eligible for.

I attempted to sign up for a study, and I was prevented from doing so because the study I was trying to sign up for is a disqualifier for another study I am scheduled to participate in. Why is this?

If you have signed up for a study that has disqualifiers (studies you must not have participated in to participate in that study), you may not then sign up for the studies that are listed as the disqualifier studies. You are allowed to sign up for the disqualifier studies if the disqualifier study will take place after the study with disqualifiers, or if you have already participated in (and received credit for) the study with disqualifiers. The easiest way to sign up for both studies is to schedule the disqualifier study at a time later than the study with disqualifiers.

I noticed that with some studies, I can sign up for them again even if I participated before, while others don't allow for this. Why is this?

Researchers can choose if their studies allow you to participate more than once. Not all studies allow you to participate more than once.

Who can see the information about my sign-ups? I don't want everyone to know which studies I signed up for.

Only the researcher and principal investigator of the study may see that you have signed up for it, along with the subject pool administrator. No other users, including other researchers, may see this information.

PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH STUDIES

What should I expect when participating in a research study?

Research studies in psychology vary widely. Some studies involve filling out questionnaires, others involve physical measurements such as heart rate, and others involve responding to stimuli on a computer. Participation in these studies is meant to be an interesting and educational experience where you gain first-hand exposure to the procedures and research methods used by psychologists.

In all studies, at the start of the research session, you will be informed of what you will be asked to do during the session and given the option of continuing or not continuing your participation. Thus, participation in each session is voluntary. After each study, the researcher will provide more information about the study to aid in your learning from the experience. In most cases, this will be information about the purpose, theoretical background and implications of the study. In some cases the researcher may need to postpone sharing some of the study information (often, this is so that you don't enter the study having heard what it's about from other students). In those cases, information will still be provided to you to aid in your learning. This information will concern the study's research

design, type of data being collected, and/or research area under study. Please ask questions—this is a great opportunity to get a feel for the ways studies are designed and conducted. It is also important to pay attention and be engaged as a participant in research so that if the study has an associated quiz you can earn credit for, you are able to pass that quiz.

Do I ever have to participate in a psychological research study?

All research with human subjects must be carried out in an ethical manner. You cannot be required to participate in research studies against your wishes. Therefore the research activity requirement can be fulfilled by participating in the other equitable opportunities:

- completing the start-of-the-semester survey
- reading research articles and taking quizzes on those articles
- taking a quiz based on a research study you participated in

The Department of Psychology's research activity requirement is considered ethical by a variety of sources. It is supported by the American Psychological Association Ethics Code which indicates: "When research participation is a course requirement or an opportunity for extra credit, the prospective participant is given the choice of equitable activities." It is consistent with other university written policies regarding how they implement research requirements. And this requirement satisfies ECU's Faculty Senate and Institutional Review Board requirements for alternatives to research participation.

What happens if I am participating in a survey study and randomly select responses to survey items to get through it quickly?

Your participation contributes to the advancement of knowledge in psychology. The field cannot learn new facts about human behavior and mental processes unless we have people help us by participating in our research studies. *Random responding* is a type of response bias where individuals respond with little pattern or thought. This behavior, which completely negates the usefulness of responses, is a significant threat to the validity of psychological research. These inaccurate responses can cause substantial mis-estimation of results and undermine detection of real effects (for example, from interventions or programs). We rely upon research to make important decisions and inform and evaluate interventions and programs, often with high stakes to those they are designed to help and with great financial and time investment. If this research has flawed data, this undermines our ability to make good decisions, and develop and implement interventions and programs to help people.

This is an extremely serious offense. Thus, if you are participating in a survey study and randomly select responses to survey items, you will not earn research credit for that study. Please remember that you are contributing to the advancement of psychological knowledge when you participate in a research study and try your best to respond in a way that reflects your true thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Your responses are confidential and kept private.

What should I do if I am participating in a survey study and come across questions that ask about thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that may be embarrassing to admit and/or illegal behavior?

Your participation contributes to the advancement of knowledge in psychology. The field cannot learn new facts about human behavior and mental processes unless we have people help us by participating in our research studies. *Social desirability* is a type of response bias in which people tend to respond in ways that makes them look good (i.e., that are socially desirable). Research participants are often extremely reluctant to give socially unacceptable answers, for fear of being judged. Participants may be reluctant to admit information that is embarrassing or illegal. For example, a participant may strive to avoid appearing homophobic or racist or may underreport drug use or driving while intoxicated. Responding in socially desirable ways can skew the results, and is one reason why researchers assure participants of the confidentiality of their responses.

Please remember that you are contributing to the advancement of psychological knowledge when you participate in a research study and try your best to respond in a way that reflects your true thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Your responses are confidential and kept private.

What should I do if I am participating in a research study and think I know what the researcher expects to find or wants to hear?

Your participation contributes to the advancement of knowledge in psychology. The field cannot learn new facts about human behavior and mental processes unless we have people help us by participating in our research studies. *Participant bias* occurs in research studies when participants adjust their behavior to what they think the researcher wants to hear. Participants may also believe that they understand the study and are aware of the expected findings, so adapt their responses to suit. This can be a significant problem in that, if participant bias occurs, then the results of a study may not be trustworthy. For this reason, researchers often do not inform their study's participants of the study's aims until after the study is complete.

Please remember that you are contributing to the advancement of psychological knowledge when you participate in a research study and try your best to respond in a way that reflects your true thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Your responses are confidential and kept private.

UNABLE TO ATTEND STUDY YOU SIGNED UP FOR

What should I do if I scheduled an appointment to participate in a research study (or a research article quiz) and am unable to attend the appointment?

When you sign up for a study (or research article quiz), be sure to write down (1) the time and date when the study/quiz takes place, (2) the location of the study/quiz, (3) the researcher's name, and (4) the researcher's e-mail address. We appreciate your participation in research studies and ask that you make every effort to show up to your appointments. If you cannot do so, please be considerate and take the time to cancel your appointment.

To ensure that students have ample opportunities to choose not to participate in the research activity, researchers must allow students to cancel their study/quiz appointment up to 24 hours before the study/quiz is to take place. If you cannot attend a study/quiz that you have signed up for:

- *If it is more than 24 hours before your scheduled time, go to **Sona Systems** and cancel your appointment as soon as possible so that another student may sign up in your place.*
- *If it is less than 24 hours before your scheduled time, send an e-mail message to the researcher informing him/her that you will not be there for your appointment.*
- *If it is within 48 hours after your scheduled time, contact the researcher to inform him/her of the reason for your no-show. It will be at the discretion of the researcher to reschedule the appointment, excuse the missed appointment, or assign you a “no-show.”*

To emphasize the need for responsible behavior, students with three or more no-shows in Sona Systems will be locked out of the system. Thus they will be prevented from any research activities offered through Sona Systems (including reading research articles and taking quizzes), and will then have to complete the research requirement by reading research articles and writing papers.

What happens if I do not show up to a research study (or research article quiz) appointment I signed up for?

We appreciate your participation in research studies and ask that you make every effort to show up to your appointments. The vast majority of students show up for appointments, but when a student signs up to participate in a study and then fails to show up without properly alerting the researchers, this negatively affects the student, other students, the researchers, and the research itself.

- It affects *you* because if you have three or more no-shows, you will be locked out of Sona Systems and will be sent an email message informing you that you have been locked out of the system. Thus you will be prevented from any research opportunities offered through Sona Systems (including reading research articles and taking quizzes), and will then have to complete the research requirement by reading research articles and writing papers.
- It affects *other students* by depriving them of the opportunity to earn research credits by taking a slot they could have signed up for.
- It affects *researchers* by wasting money, time and limited resources. They will be waiting for you having arrived early to prepare for the appointment.
- It affects the *research* by reducing the number of participants involved in the study, which can influence whether it is possible to test the study hypotheses. This can seriously harm the research being conducted in the psychology department.

Please be aware of these negative effects of not showing up to appointments when you sign up, do not sign up for something you may not attend, and if you must cancel, please let a researcher know at least 24 hours before the experiment.

CREDITS

I participated in research study, but I have yet to receive credit. How do I receive credit?

The researcher must grant you credit. Most researchers must manually assign credit in Sona Systems. Face-to-face studies typically have fewer participants per day than online studies which can amass a large number of participants daily. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to assign credit in Sona Systems within 48 hours for face-to-face studies and within a week for online studies. If it has been 48 hours (for a face-to-face study you

participated in) or a week (for an online study you participated in), contact the researcher of the study you participated in.

How many research credits are required by the mid-semester deadline?

Please note that you are required to complete 50% of the five-credit requirement (i.e., 2.5 credits) by the midpoint of the semester. If you only complete 1.0 credit before the midpoint the maximum amount of credits you can be awarded at the end of the semester is 3.5; however, you may complete more than 2.5 prior to the mid-semester point (e.g., you can earn all 5 of the required credits during the first two weeks of class).

This deadline is in place to encourage students not to wait until the end of the semester to try to earn all research credits. If students wait until the end of the semester to earn credits, there will not be enough opportunities to do so. We strongly recommend you attempt to earn research credits across the semester through completing a variety of options (participating in research studies, taking quizzes for research articles you read, taking quizzes for research studies you participated in).

What happens if I do not earn five research credits by the end of the semester deadline?

For all students enrolled in face-to-face sections of PSYC 1000 or PSYC 1060, 5% of your final grade is based on your completing research-related activities to earn five credits. That is, 5% of your total course points will result from research activities and the remaining 95% from the regular exams, quizzes, and other assignments/activities documented in your course syllabus.

Some instructors have an all or nothing policy with respect to research activity credits – that is, if you do not earn all five of the required credits, then you get zero points from research activities. Other instructors will give you course points in proportion to the number of credits you have earned, up to 5% of the total course points. Check your syllabus to determine the method your instructor employs.

To earn research credit, what is the minimum score I need to earn on the start-of-the-semester-survey, a research article quiz, or a quiz based on a research study I participated in?

To earn research credit, you must earn at least a 60% on the start-of-the-semester-survey, a research article quiz, or a quiz based on a research study you participated in. This is comparable to earning a non-failing grade (at least a D).

We strongly recommend that you pay attention and be engaged as a participant in research studies and that you study the research articles you read to help you earn a passing grade on their associated quizzes. Some research studies will have an associated quiz you can earn credit for by taking and passing the quiz. Other research studies will not have this opportunity. It is at the discretion of the researcher.

How much research credit do I earn by participating in a research study?

Studies are worth varying amounts of credit depending on how long they take. Awarding of research credit must accurately reflect the amount of time required for research participation rounded to the closest .25 hours. Each hour of participation is worth 1 credit, 45-minutes of

participation is worth .75 credit, 30 minutes of participation is worth .50 credit, and 15 minutes of participation is worth .25 credit.

OTHER QUESTION?

I have a problem that is not addressed here. What should I do?

You can e-mail us at experimentrak@ecu.edu or stop by our office in Rawl 127. To set up an appointment, send an e-mail to experimentrak@ecu.edu that includes your name, days and times you are available to meet, and a brief description of the problem.