

## Alternative Assignment Guidelines

August 18, 2017

The alternative assignment is intended for students who do not want to participate in your study but still want to learn more about your research. For the 2017-2018 school year, you have to offer an alternative assignment only if your Psychology Participant Pool participants include PSYC 200-level students seeking credit for their eligible courses. In 2018-2019, all researchers using the Psychology Participant Pool will have to offer an alternative assignment.

### Content

You have two options for the alternative assignment. Both of which must be completed by the students to your satisfaction.

1. For the **paper option**, you have several choices. You can have students:
  - a. Read a short journal article, commentary, blog post, etc.
  - b. Watch a short video
  - c. Listen to a short podcast

The material should be related to the topic of your study and should require approximately 10-15 minutes for reading, watching, or listening. Students then will need to answer questions about what they read, watched, or heard. These questions should be prepared in advance and provided in written form to the students. You should choose a set of questions that require approximately 5-10 minutes to answer in total. Thus altogether the paper alternative assignment should take a minimum of 20 minutes but no more than 30 minutes to complete. Several examples are [provided](#), but you should find your own articles and adapt the questions or develop your own questions to be more relevant to your research.

2. For the **walk through**, you have two options. If they are comfortable doing so, you can have students go through a 20-minute version of your study but without collecting their data. To ensure that the simulation takes 20 minutes, especially if being done online, we encourage you to:
  - a. Set timers on your pages, so students cannot proceed until a certain amount of time has passed.
  - b. Periodically provide questions that the students must answer correctly or be directed back to the relevant part of the simulation to go through it again until they get the question right.

Alternatively, you can verbally walk them through the procedure. One example is [provided](#). For the latter, it also may be difficult to reach the 20-minute minimum. However, here are a few strategies you can employ:

- a. Periodically ask the students questions about what you just told them or what they think might happen next. For example, have students speculate about how they would have responded, or ask them why they think different choices were made in the research design.
- b. In studies using equipment other than computers (e.g., eye tracking, physiological measurement devices, etc.), explain how the equipment works, what options you had to consider in setting it up (e.g., how far the eye tracker is placed from the screen), how you calibrate it, etc.

### Duration

The alternate exercise should take 20 minutes minimum but no more than 30 minutes because students will receive only 0.5 credit per alternative assignment regardless of the length of the actual study. If your alternative assignment is too short, you will undermine your own data collection as well as your colleagues' because students are highly likely to opt for a 5-minute assignment that yields .5 credit rather participating in your study or someone else's.

### Frequency

Students can get credit for doing the alternative assignment for a particular study only one time. You should credit the alternative assignment within your study account on SONA (just give 0.5 credit instead of the usual study credit value and add a comment that the student completed the alternative assignment). Then students can't sign up for your alternative assignment more than once or do both your study and its alternative.

Furthermore, starting this year, SONA records will be retained for 3-4 years, so those students won't be able to do your study or its alternative if they are part of the pool as PSYC 200-level students in subsequent years.

### **Scheduling**

Students will need to contact you in advance to set up an appointment to complete the assignment. You may either schedule one student at a time or wait until you have several students who have requested the alternative assignment that you can meet with as a group. However, these appointments must be completed before the end of each semester that you run your study especially because the students in PSYC 200-level courses need to be credited before the end of the term. We suggest offering at least 1 alternative assignment session each month.