

Consent Form Instructions and Samples

Ethical research and respect for persons requires that all subjects be given adequate information to allow them to make an informed and voluntary decision whether or not to participate in the research. The following information includes all the required elements of informed consent needed and how to write an informed consent form.

All elements of informed consent should be present on surveys, interviews (both written and oral), and signed consent forms. Some survey research *may* not require a **signed** consent form, but needs to include all elements of informed consent. Informed consent must be sought from all prospective participants (or their legally authorized representative), unless waived by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The IRB may waive the requirement of a *signed* consent form if: a) the consent form is the only record linking the subject with the research and the principal risk would be a potentially harmful breach of confidentiality or, b) the research presents no more than minimal risk to the participants and involves no procedures where written consent is normally required outside the context of research.

The informed consent must include the following information:

1. A statement that the study involves research.
2. A description of the procedures to be followed, its expected duration, the conditions of the subject's participation, and an identification of experimental procedures proposed.
3. The reasonably foreseeable risks and discomforts.
4. The expected benefits of the research to the subject and to society in general.
5. A description of the extent and manner which confidentiality of information will be maintained.
6. An explanation as to the availability of compensation and the availability of treatment if injury occurs, except where the research involves no more than minimal risk(s).
7. A contact person, phone number, and email address to which inquiries about the research project can be made.
8. A statement that participation is voluntary.
9. A statement that no penalties will result from non-participation or withdrawal.

Extra Credit

Participants may receive some type of compensation (i.e. course credit, a free service, money, etc.). However if teachers solicit their own students to be research subjects and extra credit is offered as compensation, there must be a fair alternative by which students who do not wish to or cannot participate in the research study can receive the same amount of credit.

Survey Research

Survey research may not require a signed consent form if names are not personally identifiable with the data collection. It does require a cover letter or informed consent statement which, with the exception of the subject signature, contains all the necessary information for informed consent. The statement, “the return of this survey is your consent to participate in the research” should be at the end of the consent document in the place of a signature line.

Vulnerable participants:

Minors (under 18 years of age):

If you use participants under the age of 18, a parent or legal guardian must sign. If the child is old enough to give verbal consent, what is expected of the child should be explained in simple terms and verbal consent obtained. This process should be noted on the consent form. If the child can read and write then the child’s form has to be written at the level of the child’s understanding. Two forms may be used: a consent form for the parents and an assent form for the child. They can be placed on the same page.

Cognitively impaired or institutionalized:

If a subject is cognitively or mentally impaired and it is questionable that he/she has the ability to understand so as to be able to give “informed consent” or “assent,” then the subject’s guardian, family member, or other person who is responsible to protect the participant’s welfare must sign. As with minors, if the participant is capable of reading/writing, the subject must also sign his/her name. The research must be explained to the subject in terms he/she can understand. Written consent should be attempted for mentally impaired persons when possible.

Please use the following example as a guide in preparing an appropriate informed consent document.

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by John Doe at San Juan College to determine how social influence relates to attitudes on political issues.

Procedures

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire or online questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 35 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes. Questions will include details about your social affiliations, demographics and your own personal views and feelings about current political issues.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel emotional discomfort when answering questions about personal beliefs

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to subjects. However, it is hoped that your participation will help researchers learn more about how social influences affect attitudes toward political issues.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data, including questionnaires will be kept in a secure location and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the questionnaires will be destroyed.

Compensation

Participants will receive 5 extra credit points in Psychology 120 for completing the questionnaire. For those who do not wish to participate in the research, 5 extra credit points can be earned by reading an article and providing a summary of that article.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your class status, grade or standing with the college.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact John Doe at 566-xxxx, jdoe24@sjcportal.edu or Dr. Jack Smith at 566-xxxx, smithj@sanjuancollege.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____