Frequently Asked Questions about Participating in Psychology Subject Pool

-How do I register with the Subject Pool so that I can do experiments and earn credit for my course?
To register for Subject Pool you must: (1) Create a SONA account, and (2) Complete the pretest. First, go to the website http://uiuc.sona-systems.com/ and click "Request an Account" on the bottom left of the screen. Use your U of I email address to register. Your password will be sent to that email address within 24 hours. Next you will fill out a pretest used to determine your eligibility for various studies.

-How do I sign up for studies?
Once you have registered, you can sign up for studies. To sign up for studies, log in to SONA and click the "Study Sign-Up" box. This will take you to a list of the studies that you are eligible to participate in. You can also click on Studies from the top toolbar and a list will be provided. This page has studies that are available on a particular day. You can select a different date by using the drop-down menu at the top of the page. For each study you can see available timeslots, and the length and location of the study. You won’t know any other details about the study until you arrive. Please note that some studies are not held in the Psychology Building, so pay attention to the study’s location. You will receive a reminder email the night before the study. However, you are responsible for showing up even if you do not get the email.

-What is the difference between registration and signing up for studies?
Registration consists of creating an SONA account and completing the pretest questionnaire. This allows you to be eligible to sign up for studies. You only need to register by September 20th. Signing up for studies occurs after you have registered for subject pool. You may sign up for and complete studies throughout the semester, as long as you complete the studies by May 6th.

-I tried to log in to SONA, but it says my password isn’t valid.
SONA does not use passwords that you use for other university services, so you will create a new account just for Subject Pool every semester. In the bottom left-hand corner, click "New participant, request an account here". If you have already created an account this semester, and cannot remember your password, click “Lost Password”. You will be able to retrieve your password by following the steps outlined there. If you have received 2 unexcused No-Shows, your account may be locked (see below for more information). If you are still unable to log in or retrieve your password, please contact the Subject Pool Coordinator.

-I have participated in Subject Pool in previous semesters. Can I reuse my old log-in and information?
The participant account information gets erased at the end of each semester. So even if you have participated in Subject Pool in an earlier semester, your account no longer exists. You will have to create a new account, fill out the necessary information, and complete the pretest again.

-I am under 18 years old, but need to participate in Subject Pool for my class. What do I do?
If you are under 18, you still need to register for SONA and complete the pretest. After you complete the pretest, you will receive information from the Subject Pool Coordinator with information about an alternative assignment. The alternative assignment allows you to complete simulated experiments online, and you will receive credit for each simulated experiment.

-It is after the registration deadline, can I still participate in Subject Pool?
Even though it is past the deadline, you can still take part in Subject Pool. Follow the directions above to create an account, complete the pretest, and sign up for studies. If you are under-18 and need the alternative assignment, please email the Subject Pool Coordinator if it is past the registration deadline.

-I have an account, but I need to change my course/section assignment. How do I do that?
If you have already created an account, here is how you change your course assignment: Log into your account using the user ID and password provided by SONA. Click on “My Profile” near the top of the page. Click on “Change Courses”. Scroll down until you find your correct course/section, then click on that course/section. Click “Save Changes”.

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-I am enrolled in multiple courses that are included in Subject Pool. What do I do?
You can use one account for multiple courses. However, each study can only count towards one class. So if you have 2 classes that each need 3 credits, you would have to complete 6 studies. If you already have an account, you can register for both classes on that account. To sign up for both classes: Log in to SONA using the user ID and password provided. Click “My Profile” near the top of the page. Click “Change Courses”. Scroll down until you find the first course and select it. Scroll down until you find the second course. Hold down the control key on your keyboard and then select that course. Click “Save Changes”. If you do not have an account, you will have to create an account first (see instructions above). When you are asked to select a course, scroll down until you find the first course and select it. Scroll down until you find the second course. Hold down the control key on your keyboard and then select that second course.

-I want to change which course my study credit is assigned to. How can I do that?
When you sign up for the study, you select which course you want that credit to be assigned to (if you are registered for more than one course). If, after you have completed the study, you want to switch which course the credit is assigned to, you must email the Subject Pool Coordinator and tell them what you want to change. Students cannot change the credit assignment once the study has been completed, only the administrator can. Credit assignments may be changed at any time during the semester, and up to 1 day after the last day to participate in studies (this is when the credits are sent to the instructors).

-When I am try to sign-up for studies it says that studies are not available. Am I doing something wrong? First, make sure you are looking in the right spot for studies to sign up for. (See signing up for studies, above). Second, SONA only shows you the studies that are available on a particular day. So, you need to make sure you are checking a variety of different dates for available studies. You can select a different date by using the menu at the top of the study sign-up page. Do not panic if there are no studies posted for the first few weeks of the semester. Studies are posted throughout the semester as researchers are ready to run them. There is no specific schedule for when studies are posted, which is why you need to check the site frequently. Dates and times fill up quickly, so you must check often. It takes a few weeks at the beginning of the semester for studies to be posted, but eventually you will find them scheduled for every day of the week and at many different times. You must schedule studies via the web site; and attend only the studies that you schedule via the web site, and you must attend at the date/time that you’ve scheduled.

-How do I know how many credits I have earned?
You can keep track of your appointments and the credits you have earned via SONA. Log into your account and click on “My Schedule and Credits.”

-I need 3 credits for my class. Do I need to complete all 3 credits through one study?
Studies are worth anywhere from 1 to 3 credits, depending on the length. You may participate in any combination of credit hours to complete the credits needed for your class. However, you will not be awarded extra credit for any hours over the maximum amount of credit allowed for you class.

-I received a No-Show. What does that mean?
In SONA, a No-Show includes any situation in which the participant does not receive credit. A No-Show is NOT a penalty. A No-Show does not remove a credit earned; it just does not add a credit to your account. Any of the following situations can be classified as a No-Show: a missed session, a late arrival to a session, failure to complete an online study, a session that the researcher canceled more than 24 hours in advance, or a participant choosing to or being asked to leave. The ONLY way to know what kind of No-Show a situation is (and whether it should be excused or unexcused), is by what the researcher writes in the comments box. If you receive two unexcused No-Shows, your account will be locked. While your account is locked, you will be unable to sign up for studies, although you can still take part in any studies that you have already signed up for and will receive credit for any studies completed thus far. Your account can be unlocked by completing online ethics training at https://www.citiprogram.org/. You will need to complete the 5 UIUC required modules and submit documentation (the completion certificate) that you have successfully completed the ethics training before your account can be unlocked.
I missed a couple of studies, and now I can’t log into my account. What happened?
If you missed at least two studies without providing proper documentation, then you were marked as an unexcused No-Show for those absences and your account has been locked/disabled. See above.

I am trying to log into my account, but it says that it has been disabled? What can I do?
Accounts are disabled if a participant has received 2 unexcused No-Shows. You can be marked as an unexcused No-Show if you do not have a valid excuse for missing a study, arrive late to a study, or do not complete an online study once you have begun it. An unexcused No-Show does not affect the credits you have earned through other studies. However, if you receive two unexcused No-Shows, your account will be locked. While your account is locked, you will be unable to sign up for studies, although you can still take part in studies that you have already signed up for and will receive credit for any studies completed thus far. There are two ways to get your account unlocked. First, provide documentation justifying at least one of the unexcused No-Shows. Documentation would include a letter from the emergency dean, McKinley, or other authorized professional. The second option is to complete additional online ethics training at https://www.citiprogram.org/. From the website, select UIUC as your institution and complete the 5 UIUC required modules and submit the completion certificate to show that you have successfully completed the ethics training before your account can be unlocked. Send all documentation via email or drop it off in the box on the door of 305 Psychology. Without documentation justifying the unexcused No-Show or showing your completion of the ethics training, your account will remain locked for the remainder of the semester. Contact the Subject Pool Coordinator for more information.

Canceling studies
If it is more than 24 hours before the appointment, then you can cancel via the SONA website. Log in and click "My Schedule/Credits". This screen shows studies that you are signed up for. If an appointment is more than 24 hours away, there will be a Cancel button next to it. Once you click Cancel, you will need to confirm that you want to cancel the appointment. Print a copy of this page as a record of your cancellation. If it is less than 24 hours before the appointment, or if you miss an appointment, you need to email both the researcher in charge of the study and the Subject Pool Coordinator ASAP. Please include justification for the cancellation/absence and any supporting documentation. This information will be reviewed and in certain cases (emergency, documented illness, etc), the No-Show may be excused. Typically, if you cancel less than 24 hours in advance or miss an appointment, it will be considered an unexcused No-Show.

I am sick/have an emergency/other legitimate excuse and I can’t make it to my appointment
As soon as you realize that you are not going to make your appointment, you need to email both the researcher in charge of the study and the Subject Pool Coordinator ASAP. Please include justification for the cancellation/absence and any supporting documentation. This information will be reviewed and in certain cases (emergency, documented illness, etc), the No-Show may be excused.

An experimenter cancelled my appointment, do I still get credit?
Sometimes, a researcher will cancel a study. If a researcher cancels less than 24 hours in advance, you will receive credit for the study. If it is more than 24 hours in advance, it will be marked as an excused No-Show in the SONA system.

I completed a study, but the status for that study is still awaiting action?
Researchers must record credit within 48 hours of the study. If it has been more than 48 hours, and it still says awaiting action, contact the researcher in charge of the study and Subject Pool Coordinator.

I didn’t receive study credit, but was told that it would be an excused No-Show. What does that mean?
This can occur for 3 main reasons. One is if a researcher cancels a study more than 24 hours in advance. In these cases, a researcher will mark you as a No-Show, but indicate that the study was canceled, making it an excused No-Show. Second, if you are being disruptive, or purposely providing inaccurate or inappropriate responses, you will be asked to leave and will be marked as an excused No-Show. Third, if you have provided valid documentation for missing the study, you will be marked as an excused No-Show. If your situation does not fall in to either of these categories, contact the Subject Pool Coordinator.
-I need credit for Subject Pool, but I don’t want to do experiments. What other options do I have?
As long as your account has not been locked due to unexcused No-Show, you can be given an alternative assignment instead of participating in Subject Pool experiments. Please see your instructor for details about this alternative assignment.

-I am uncomfortable with a study that I am participating in. Can I withdraw from the study in the middle?
If you feel that a study violates your moral, religious, or ethical values, or makes you feel uncomfortable, you can withdraw from the study. If you withdraw from a one hour study, you will not receive any credit for the session. For studies that are longer than one hour or studies that include multiple sessions, you can receive pro-rated credit for partial completion of the study. The researcher must provide a Voluntary Withdrawal Form, which you must fill out and return to the Subject Pool Coordinator to receive partial credit.

-I signed up for a multi-session study, but missed one of the required sessions. What do I do?
If you sign up for a multiple session study it is your responsibility to attend all of the sessions or cancel your participation in the entire study. However, you may receive pro-rated credit for partial completion of a multi-session study. Ask the researcher to provide a Voluntary Withdrawal Form, which you must fill out and return to the Subject Pool Coordinator to receive partial credit.

-I showed up to an experiment, but the researcher said I was not signed up for it. What do I do?
The researcher should have a current sign-up sheet printed out from the SONA website. If possible, check your SONA account and make sure that you are at the right study location and time. If you can verify that you are at the correct time/place/study #, then you should be able to participate. If not, then you will not be able to participate.

-I accidentally participated in an experiment that I was not signed up for, and haven’t received credit
Email the Subject Pool Coordinator and provide as much information as you can about the study (time, location, room, researcher name, study description) ASAP.

-I got an email from a researcher asking me to complete additional follow-up questionnaires or come in for an additional session. Do I have to do it?
Understand that you are ONLY required to participate in each experiment for study’s duration (1, 2, or 3 hours). You are not required to do anything outside of that study’s session. On occasion a experimenter might email you before or after an experiment and ask you to complete additional sessions or surveys. Unless this is part of a multi-session study, you are not required to complete this additional information, but may do so voluntarily or for monetary compensation.