

Required Research Participation Assignment

(last updated: Spring 2026)

PSYC 2, 4, & 8 students are required to serve as a research participant for research being conducted by Psychology Department faculty and students. Review the following instructions.

Signing up to participate in research studies

All research for subject pool credit is managed through SONA, the [Psychology Research website](#).

Once you are logged in, you can sign up for studies and view a summary of your research credits and requirements.

What happens if I don't complete my required hours?

If you don't complete your required hours, you will receive an *"Incomplete"* in your class. This may affect your ability to enroll in courses that require PSYC 2, 4, or 8 as prerequisites (e.g., an *Incomplete* in PSYC 8 would make you ineligible to enroll in PSYC 120 or 121.)

If you receive an *Incomplete*, you will have one year to complete the required research participation assignment. If it is not completed within that time, the University will automatically change the *Incomplete* to an "F". Do *not* re-enroll in the class in which you received the *Incomplete*. Instead, you must complete the assignment by finishing the missing research hours (e.g., if you completed 2 of the required 3 hours, you only need to complete 1 more hour).

Alternatively, you may complete the requirement by submitting the alternative

writing assignment; however, this option is not recommended, as the alternative assignments are reviewed only at the end of each semester, and approval of your submission is not guaranteed.

After you complete your hours, you must notify the Psychology Department (psychology@csus.edu) so we can submit a grade change form to replace the *Incomplete* grade. There is no automatic notification system for the department, so it is your responsibility to notify the department about your completion of the requirement.

I do not want to participate in research. Do I have other options?

The purpose of the participation requirement is to learn about research methods first-hand, through direct experience as a research participant in current research projects going on in our Department. However, you cannot be forced to participate in research against your will. It is a completely voluntary process where you give informed consent to serve as a research participant.

If you do not want to participate, you have the option of carrying out an alternative writing assignment. This alternative assignment is designed to help you demonstrate your understanding of research methods by reviewing reports of recent studies published in psychology research journals, even if you are engaging with the research second-hand. You can find instructions for the alternative writing assignment on the [Human Subjects Research Participation](#) website.

How can I check how many hours I need, and how many I have already completed?

Log in to the [Psychology Research website](#) and click on *My Schedule/Credits* for a summary of your credits and study signups.

What is the 5-digit participant ID code?

As extra protection for your privacy, we have opted to assign a unique 5-digit ID code to each student.

This code is separate from your student ID and login information; it is used in place of your name when researchers view their lists of sign-ups for their projects and assign credits to you as participants. They will not see your name, only your 5-digit ID.

You can find your 5-digit ID code when you view your profile in the research website, and in e-mail confirmations and reminders that are sent to you for upcoming sessions.

IMPORTANT: Bring your 5-digit ID code to all research sessions so you can be assigned credit for your participation! If you need to communicate with researchers

about your participation in a study, they will not have a record of your name in their participant lists, so you will need to tell them your ID code if they need to make any credit adjustments.

When should I sign up?

Some of the larger, continuation studies will be available early in the semester. After mid-semester, newer projects will start to become available.

Availability of research will diminish drastically after the 14th week of the semester. During the last week (Week 15), availability will be much more limited, as there may be few studies still running. In addition, all data collection will end by the last day of instruction (Friday), so we strongly recommend getting most or all hours completed prior to the last week.

What are the studies like, and what should I expect when I participate?

Research studies in our department may be conducted online or in person.

Online studies typically consist of completing survey questionnaires, though some may involve more active computer-based tasks (e.g., responding to stimuli on a screen, making judgments). You will receive a study link (usually hosted on Qualtrics). After opening the link, you will first read an informed consent form describing the study and your rights as a participant. You will indicate your consent (for example, by clicking an “I agree” button). Next, instructions and materials such as questionnaires or computer tasks will appear on your screen. At the end of the study, you will see a debriefing page

that explains the purpose of the research.

In-person studies often involve either completing paper-and-pencil surveys or taking part in tasks administered by the researcher. You may be asked to perform certain activities and/or answer questionnaires. You will sign in upon arrival, complete the informed consent process, follow the researcher's instructions and complete the study tasks, and receive a debriefing afterwards.

Regardless of the format, you should expect the following:

- Courteous, professional treatment from researchers.
- An informed consent process before the study, giving you basic information and allowing you to opt out without penalty (other than forfeiting the research credit you would have received).
- The option to refuse to answer any questions you are not comfortable with, or to discontinue participation at any time.
- A debriefing at the conclusion of the study so you can learn about its purpose.
- Prompt (within 1–2 days) assignment of credit in the Psychology Research Website so you can track your progress.

While online studies are more common, we encourage you to participate in in-person studies whenever possible because they provide unique educational benefits of experiencing how research is conducted in a laboratory setting and interacting directly with researchers. To recognize the additional time commitment and effort involved in in-person participation, credits for these projects will be double-counted.

In-person research projects will display the double-counted hours (i.e., credits you will actually receive) on SONA website (e.g., an in-person study that lasts 30 minutes or less will show that it offers one (1) hour credit.

How do I prepare to participate in a study?

Make sure you know your 5-digit participant ID number that is assigned to you by the Research Website. It is your responsibility to make sure the researcher gets your number so that you will receive credit for your participation.

Beyond that, the most important thing you can do is show up on time (if the study requires in-person participation), ready to take the experience seriously and put forth your best effort. After all, you would hope for the same if you were in the researchers' shoes—and you may be in those shoes if you continue to study psychology!

Please do keep in mind that researchers put a LOT of time, effort, and planning into preparing their research studies and they have a genuine interest in obtaining high-quality and meaningful results. Please be helpful and courteous to them.

Can I participate in a study that I did not sign up for in advance?

While it is strongly preferred that you sign up in advance, researchers who conduct in-person studies may have a mechanism for assigning credit to drop-ins, at their discretion. However, they are under no obligation to accept drop-ins or to show up to a session that nobody had signed up for by 6 pm of the prior evening.

I signed up for an in-person study, but something came up and I can't attend—what do I do?

As a good CSUS citizen and student of psychology, it is important that you take your appointments and participation seriously.

You may cancel your appointment through the Psychology Research Website any time up to 6 pm the evening before the study.

After 6 pm, you will not be allowed to cancel so you should contact the researcher with as much prior notice as possible, so that they can plan accordingly for your absence.

If you do not cancel and do not contact the researcher, you will be assigned as a “no-show”.

I signed up for an in-person study, but I am running late for my appointment—what do I do?

Show up and talk to the researcher, possibly to reschedule for a later day or time.

Do not disrupt the research session. Do not open doors that are closed. Studies have strict procedures and interruptions throw the session off.

If the researcher is in the hallway or doorway then they may be willing to quietly discuss the situation. Be prepared to wait until the end of the session to avoid disruption.

What happens if I miss an appointment that I had signed up for, and did not cancel or contact

the researcher ahead of time?

You most likely have been marked as a “no-show” on the project. If your absence was due to an emergency and you contact the researcher quick enough, you may be able to have it designated as an “excused” no-show, which means it will not count toward your “no-show” tally that is kept in the system (see below). If possible, please reschedule with the same researchers so they don't lose a participant entirely.

I missed several appointments that I made, and now the system won't let me sign up for more studies. What can I do?

If you have multiple no-shows, displaying a pattern of making appointments but then failing to show up for them, the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee and your course instructor(s) will be notified. If the problem continues, your subject pool privileges may be revoked, meaning you will not be able to participate in any more research during that semester.

You may complete the **Alternative Writing Assignment** to satisfy your requirement and avoid the “Incomplete” grade—otherwise take the incomplete and do your hours next semester.

If you feel that you have a compelling reason to have your subject pool privileges reinstated, explain yourself clearly in writing and submit your request to the SONA research website administrator for consideration. Be prepared to submit documentation of any emergencies or situations outside of your control that led to your excessive no-shows. Allow approximately one week for a response.

The researcher did not show up. What do I do?

Researchers put a LOT of time, effort, and planning into preparing their research studies and it is very rare that you will experience a missing researcher.

If you signed up in advance for an in-person research session, and you did not cancel through the website, and you showed up for the study but found the researcher to be absent (not late, but absent), then you are entitled to receive credit. Contact the researcher. Contact the SONA research website administrator for further assistance if the issue is not resolved in a timely fashion.

Credit will NOT be granted automatically to participants who do not contact the researcher within a reasonable amount of time (usually the same or next day). We will assume that those who do not contact the researcher were also no-shows, and they have already benefitted by avoiding a “no-show” mark in the Research Website.

I’m in two classes that require research hours—what do I do?

You are required to complete separate hours for each class. The Psychology Research Website will allow you to divvy up your earned hours across your different classes. YOU must make sure that each class has the required number of hours.

Instructors will ONLY see their own class rosters, so if you have allocated too few hours to a particular class, you will receive an Incomplete grade in that class.