

Additional Information about the PSYC 103 research requirement: General Information, rights and responsibilities of participants, and how to report problems.

General Information

The Psychology Department requires that you participate in our department's research or engage in an alternative assignment (journal article review) for several reasons: The experience is educational, allowing you to learn "first hand" about psychological research. Your participation also helps to train our advanced psychology majors, who are learning how to conduct scientific investigations (under faculty supervision, of course). Finally, these efforts may even give you an opportunity to contribute to the body of psychological knowledge. Student and faculty researchers in the Psychology Department conduct scientific investigations on many of the topics. These research projects typically require 30-60 minutes of your time, and the participants are primarily students from Psychology 103 classes.

Some students, for whatever reason, may prefer not to participate in psychological research as a human participant. Students have the option of satisfying this course requirement in an alternative fashion. The research alternative or option will require you to review a journal article. After carefully reading the article, you must answer several questions in brief essay format. Your course instructor will make the details of this information available to you.

About the requirement

Every semester many different kinds of research projects are conducted or supervised by faculty members of the Psychology Department. Examples include surveys of attitudes, assessments of learning and memory, experiments in sensation and perception, studies of group dynamics, and so on. As part of your Psychology course, you are required to participate in such research projects. One of the educational goals in our Psychology Department is to give you the direct experience of actual research. If you choose to participate in research, we hope that the experience will provide you with a greater understanding of the research process. For those of you that elect the research alternative (journal article review), you will have the opportunity to read and learn about psychological studies in more detail than is typically offered in most Introductory Psychology textbooks. We hope every student will come away with a better appreciation of the kinds of problems that psychologists investigate and the variety of techniques that they use to investigate these problems.

Each student in PSYC must participate in approximately 3 hours of research (earning 10 research credits) in order to satisfy the course requirement. Your instructor will explain how certain details of research participation will be managed in your class. The purpose of the material below is to clarify aspects of research participation that apply to all students who choose to participate.

What Are Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Research Participant?

Your participation must be voluntary.

It is the College's policy that students not be forced in any way to participate in research as subjects. If you participate in research, it must be done voluntarily. Although your PSYC 103 class has a research participation requirement, you can choose not to participate in research. If you choose not to participate in research, then you must be offered an alternative activity to meet the research requirement. Your professor will describe this alternative to you.

You have the right to discontinue participation.

The Psychology Department is very concerned that no study be conducted that would in any way be harmful to you. Even so, it is possible that in rare cases you may feel uncomfortable about participating in a study for which you have volunteered. Remember that you always have the right to leave any experiment at any time. Furthermore, you don't have to explain why you want to leave, and you can never be penalized for leaving after the study has begun.

Your participation should be educational.

Participating in research should be a learning experience for you. You are entitled to have your questions about the experiment answered. Each experimenter is required to set aside at least five minutes at the end of an experimental session to answer any questions you might have. Usually, full information about the purpose and method of the study will be given to you at this time; however, this may not always be possible. If the underlying rationale for the study is not presented to you at the end of the experimental session, then the experimenter is obligated to tell you how and when such information will be provided.

You have the right to be treated well by the experimenter.

It is your right to be treated with the utmost respect and courtesy by the experimenter.

You have the right to receive earned credits.

If you do what you're supposed to do (sign up properly, show up at the right place at the right time, etc.), you have a right to receive the credit you've earned. Even if an experimenter had an equipment breakdown, or failed to show up to conduct the study, you are still entitled to receive credit for your effort. In these instances, see the section below on how to report a problem.

You have the right to learn about the results of the study.

Some experimenters may not be able to provide results until the entire experiment is completed (e.g., at the end of the following semester). In these instances, investigators should provide you with the necessary contact information for obtaining the results at a later date.

You are responsible to honor your appointment time or call in advance to cancel an appointment that you cannot attend.

It is very important that you show up for your appointment. Do not sign up for a study unless you are sure that you will be able to keep the appointment. If you learn that you cannot honor your appointment, be sure to cancel it by the cancellation deadline (it varies by experiment). Please be courteous; people have worked hard to plan their experiments and count on participants to honor their appointments.

How Do You Report a Problem?

If you ever feel that any of your rights have been violated, we want to know about it. You should report any problem to the Department of Psychology Participant Pool Committee. This committee will investigate your complaint and take the appropriate measures to correct the problem. You may call any of the members of this committee:

Cindi May, mayc@cofc.edu, 953-6735

John Widholm, widholmj@cofc.edu, 953-8194

Conclusions:

We hope that you have a positive, enjoyable research experience and learn something about the science of psychology from your experience. In particular, we hope that your participation will help to make concrete some of the difficult concepts (like independent variable) that you are studying in Psychology. We also hope that by providing data needed to answer research questions, you will potentially contribute to the body of knowledge that comprises the discipline of psychology. Finally, we want to thank you for helping to provide a beneficial learning experience for upper-level psychology majors who, as part of their training, must conduct research for course requirements. **Note.** The exact manner in which PSYC 103 research requirement affects grading policies are determined by your course instructor. Please refer to your instructor and relevant documents (e.g., course syllabus) for further information (e.g., the percentage of your grade the requirement will constitute).

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