

Researcher FAQs

Q. How do I get a Researcher account in SONA?

If you are a faculty member or graduate student, email Terry Kinney. He will need your email name (e.g. terrykinney) rather than your accessID (e.g. ae9075; this latter will be used to set up your Instructor account). Everyone at Wayne is automatically assigned an accessID, but you choose and set your own email name from within webmail. Don't just make something up within SONA; go to webmail and actually do it officially, or you'll never get emails from SONA. (That is, terrykinney or ae9075_researcher doesn't exist on wayne.edu just because SONA lets you register that way; such an account exists only if you do it in webmail.)

We do not allow undergraduates or post-bach's to have researcher accounts in SONA.

Q. How do I set up a study in SONA?

Once you have a Researcher account, log in and poke around. Setting up studies is pretty self-explanatory. Note that you cannot get very far before you have to enter an HIC approval date and protocol number, so get that paperwork started as soon as you can.

There is a question toward the end of the experiment setup asking you if this project is to be considered a "Research Alternative." Leave this with its default value (no) -- it has to do with providing locked-out subjects another way to get credits, but we are already required to have a different way for them (this often involves summarizing research articles or something similar).

You may wish to refer to the Researcher Guide to SONA systems linked from main page.

PLEASE READ BELOW for important information about how many credits you may offer!

Q. Do I need to include Appendix B ("Internet Use in Research") along with my HIC application?

If the only use of the Internet is that you're using SONA to do your recruiting, no. If you will actually be using the Internet (SONA or any other method) for data collection, yes.

Q. How and when can I add questions to the pre-screen?

Lee needs to see HIC approval for any new questions. You should not submit a new protocol to HIC just to cover your desired pre-screen questions, because presumably they are part of some larger study. You should therefore include, as part of your *original* submission to HIC, details about how you will recruit (i.e. based on the answers to your desired prescreen questions). If the desired prescreen questions will be used as part of an already-approved protocol, you can simply submit an amendment detailing how you intend to recruit.

Our pre-screen protocol does not allow for participants younger than 18 years old to participate in research studies.

You should then go into SONA and create a new online experiment that consists of just these questions to be added, formatted in whatever way is desired. This experiment should NOT be made active! Tell Terry what the name of this "study" is, and he can transfer it into the pre-screen as a whole piece.

Questions can be added each semester. The deadline for having the HIC approval and the dummy study completed is noon on each Study Day (roughly mid December, late April, and mid August).

Q. When must I stop data collection each term?

At noon on Study Day. Please note that this is a LOCAL rule and deadline. SONA will happily let you put out timeslots past this time, and people can sign up. But they (and you) will have heartache because of it, because at noon on Study Day, all researchers and all participants are locked out of SONA systems until the beginning of the next term.

Q. My study is approved and I've set it up in SONA, but participants are telling me they can't see it. Why?

There are two possibilities. First, you have not set up any timeslots (or you did, but they're all full). Studies only appear to participants if there are available timeslots. Second, you may have established eligibility criteria that the participants don't meet.

Q. How many credits may I offer for my study?

Department policy is that online studies can offer 0.5 credit. If you wish to offer more than this for an online study, you need to clear it with the Research Committee (email

Pradeep Sopory). They will want information about your study, and may want to see data demonstrating that it takes substantially longer than 30 minutes to complete.

For in-person studies, the guideline is to offer 0.5 credit for any study taking up to 30 minutes, 1.0 for any study taking 31 to 60 minutes, and so on. In addition to this, in-person studies are allowed if they wish to offer an additional 0.5 credit for the time and trouble the participant will have to go through to travel to the lab, park, walk across campus, or whatever.

Q. Why can't I log into SONA system?

All researchers are locked out of the system each semester at noon on Study Day. Access is granted again about a week later.

A second possibility is that you do not yet have your account set up. Email Terry Kinney.

Q. Why does SONA give me the option of awarding an Excused No-Show?

This has to do with federal rules in instances where there is an actual penalty associated with no-shows. That doesn't apply to us because simply locking subjects out is not considered a penalty. You generally will not use this option, unless it was **your** fault that the experiment didn't take place. You should instead award Unexcused No-Shows (see next question).

Q. Do I have to award an Unexcused No-Show when a participant misses their appointment?

Yes. Department policy is that you punish participants who fail to keep their appointment with you without canceling it. Your colleagues are trusting you to punish wrongdoers so that no-show rates remain low for all researchers. Prior to implementation of SONA, the no-show rate was right around 50%. Now it's more like 15%, and all of us would like to keep it low.

Q. How do I un-do a no-show if I made a mistake?

First, please remember that you are only supposed to do this if the no-show was given in error. If the person really did miss their appointment, then we encourage the

use of Unexcused No-Shows no matter how compelling the reason. Students are allowed one Unexcused No-Show per semester without penalty.

If you do need to un-do a wrongful no-show, click "Modify Timeslot" just as you would to award credit. If they have in fact done the experiment, award the credit. If not, but if it wasn't a true no-show that needs to be logged, you can cancel the timeslot and then it is as if they never signed up. Or you could change it to an Excused No-Show. NB! Either way, you must also send an email to terrykinney@wayne.edu telling us that you did this. Otherwise the no-show still counts as unexcused in the system and the student may be locked out.

Q. How often do I need to download the data from my online study?

It's up to you, but if you are storing more than about 10,000 total responses, SONA will complain to the administrator and then he will complain to you. It's a good policy to download, back up, and delete your data from the server at least every semester, and more often if yours is a large ongoing study. Here's how:

Click "Download Survey Responses" and then follow steps 1 and 2 at the bottom of the page. Then carefully determine that you have all of your data (there may be issues relating to the number of columns you have, depending on the version of Excel you're running; and depending on your N, you have to download multiple files or "parts"). Make a backup. Then click back into your study and click "View Survey Data Usage." The button at the bottom says "Delete Survey Responses" -- that's what you need to do.

SONA should not be considered a place where you keep a backup copy of your data. Storing data there other than the prescreen data creates a noticeable drag on the system.