

# CONSENT PREAMBLE & POST STUDY ACTIONS FOR ONLINE STUDIES (SURVEYS, TASKS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

## 1. The Preamble

### Tips for Researchers:

- Your preamble should go right at the beginning of the online survey or study, before the questions or tasks.
- You can use your complete Letter of Information as the preamble, followed by the consent button/s, OR you can link to your Letter of Information from within a shorter preamble.
- Higher risk or more complex studies should include sufficient information about the study within the preamble (whether it be the entire LOI or just key parts of it), prior to consent, to convey what is involved and what the risks are in participating.
- Remember to adapt the template below to fit your study by adding and/or removing items as appropriate (e.g. particular risks, incentives, withdrawal information, etc.).
- Only use the template below if you are using a shorter preamble with a link to the complete Letter of Information. The other option is to make the preamble your complete Letter of Information.
- Consult the [MREB Letter of Information template](#) to ensure you have included all of the necessary information for fully informed consent.
- In addition to providing the full LOI at the time of consent, it is recommended to provide the LOI to participants in advance where possible, e.g. via email, so that they can preview it.

---

This study is being conducted by [Principal Investigator/Student Investigator/Faculty Supervisor names, Departments/Programs and Contact Information]

The purpose of the study is to [explain in plain language why the study is being conducted]. Information gathered during this study will be written up as a [term paper, report, thesis, dissertation, book chapter, conference talk, scholarly journal article/paper etc.]. People participating in this study must be [insert inclusion or exclusion criteria, e.g., 18 years of age or older].

The [survey/study tasks] should take approximately [##] minutes to complete. For your time you will receive [incentive/SONA credits/draw for...]. To learn more about this study, particularly in terms of any risks or harms associated with the study, how confidentiality and anonymity will be handled, withdrawal procedures, incentives that are promised, how to obtain information about the study's results, how to find helpful resources should any questions or tasks make you uncomfortable or upset etc., please read the [Letter of Information](#).

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the [McMaster Research Ethics Board](#) (MREB#).

If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat  
Telephone 1-(905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
E-mail: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

## 2. Consent Statements

### **Tips for Researchers:**

- If the participant clicks “No” they should receive a message confirming they declined participation, e.g., “Thank you. You have decided not to participate in this study. No data has been collected from you.”
- If the participant clicks “Yes” they should be taken to the start of the survey or study tasks.
- At the end of the survey or study tasks, you will likely want to thank participants for their time, e.g., “Thank you for taking part in this study. Your responses are a valuable part of this research.”
- If the study included deception/partial disclosure, then the debrief information and re-consent process (if necessary) would follow the end of the data collection.
- You may put a “Submit” button below the “thank you” statement and instructions on how to get out of the study.

---

[There may be additional consent statements in addition to the general consent to participate. For example, a checkbox to indicate consent for use of data in future research.]

- I agree to allow my study data to be stored and used for future research as described in the Letter of Information

[Sample consent language]

Having read the above preamble OR above preamble and the linked Letter of Information, I understand that by clicking the “Yes” button below, I agree to take part in this study.

YES I agree to participate in this study.

NO I do not agree to participate in this study.

---

## 3. Study Withdrawal

### **Tips for Researchers:**

- There should be a “Quit” button, or skip remaining questions button, on each page of the online study. If the participant decides to click the “quit button” at any time during the survey or study tasks you should then have the following statement appear:

“Thank you. You have decided to quit this study. None of your responses have been collected or stored.”

- Some platforms may not automatically delete partial data when quitting the study, and the researcher will need to do this. In some studies, if the platform allows, it may be appropriate to ask for permission to use data collected to the point of withdrawal. The above template language would need to be revised for these other scenarios.
- Participants should be told upon quitting whether they will receive compensation automatically or if they need to contact the researcher to obtain partial or full compensation. If quitting means compensation is not possible then participants should be told this in the Preamble.

#### 4. Possible Post Study Actions

##### Tips for Researchers:

- You may decide to link the “Quit” or “Submit” button to a separate sub-survey that includes the Post Study Actions listed below. This allows you to keep participant contact information separate from the data. Some post study actions/information should be in the initial survey/data collection (e.g. link to resources, consent to use data in future research).
- If your study is anonymous and you want to collect contact information for post-study actions, make sure that your online study platform can store this information in a separate file from the study response data **AND** include this statement “Please note that your name and contact information will remain completely confidential and will not be linked with any of your study responses.”
- Collect only what contact information you need to carry out the post study action.
- There should be a “submit” button on the new sub-survey page to submit the contact information. Once participants have clicked the “submit button”, they should receive a confirmation and thank you, e.g. “You have been entered in the draw. Again, thank you for participating in this study.”
- If collecting contact information for a follow up interview/survey/focus group, and it is necessary to link the initial data collected to the follow-up data at an individual level, then the separate file for the contact information should probably store a Participant ID (unique pseudonym/identifier). The idea is that both the survey response file and the follow-up data collection file would contain a Participant ID field to be able to connect the data. In this scenario the Letter of Information should clearly state that the initial data collected will not be anonymous, as it can be linked to the contact information via the Participant ID.

- 
- I agree to have the responses up to the point of quitting the study retained for use in the research. (If online platform allows for this when withdrawing)
  - Link to educational debriefing letter (e.g. as required for studies awarding course credit).
  - Link to counselling resources. (Online research may include international participants so counselling resources should be available to all participants anywhere.)
  - I agree to allow my study data to be stored and used for future research as described in the Letter of Information
  - I would like a copy of the study results. Please send them here: (preferred contact)
  - I agree to be contacted for a follow up interview/survey/focus group (preferred contact)
  - I agree to be added to a database to be contacted for future research. Please contact me here: (preferred contact)
  - I would like to have my incentive/reimbursement sent here: (preferred contact)

- I would like to enter a draw for (gift card, prize). Please contact me here: (preferred contact)
- I agree to allow my anonymized study data to be uploaded to an open science data sharing platform