

Human Subjects Pool – Planning the Debriefing

The debriefing process should augment the debriefing form. It should not reiterate what is on the debriefing hand out. Researchers should not merely read the debriefing form to participants. The oral debriefing should **not** be a script. Rather, oral debriefing is intended to be an opportunity for a conversation between researcher and participant.

Researchers/PIs should train RAs and give them a chance to practice in the lab so that they can: (1) effectively summarize the key points on the oral debriefing summary; (2) answer questions about the study effectively.

Single subject studies and small group administration where participants finish roughly at once:

Plan a 3 minute explanation and allow for 2 minutes of questions.

What to put in IRB protocol:

"Subjects will be debriefed as a group (or individually if running single-subjects) when they all have finished the study. Materials will be collected (or whatever is appropriate for your particular study) and then the researcher will explain the following points:

- (1) write first point here
- (2) write second point here
- (3) write third point here

The debriefing form will then be distributed and participants will then be invited to ask questions. After questions are answered, we will point out our email address on the debriefing form in case they have additional questions about the study. They will then be thanked and told the study has concluded."

Group administration where individuals finish at their own pace:

As above, but do the debriefing outside of the room (preferably in an adjacent room so that it is private), one by one, or in small groups if students finish at the same time. Do not hold all participants "prisoner" until everyone is finished. Tell students that they need to check in with you, where you will take attendance before they leave. This will ensure that each student will come to see you. Larger groups may require that more than one research assistant help with the debriefing process.

Sample IRB protocol would look like:

"Subjects will be debriefed individually as they complete the questionnaire packet. They will be instructed to bring their questionnaire to the researcher and sign in, in the adjacent lab room #555. At that time, the researcher will cover these main points in the oral debriefing:

- (1) write first point here
- (2) write second point here
- (3) write third point here

Participants will then be invited to ask questions. After questions are answered, the researcher will give them a written debriefing form and point out the lab coordinator's email address in case they have additional questions about the study. They will then be thanked and told the study has concluded."

Note: Oral debriefing may be impractical for very large group administration (e.g. 50). In this case, you may elect to use a Q&A format instead of the oral debriefing process described here, or to hand out a written debriefing (as in a web study), allow subjects time to read it, and then ask questions.

Online-only study:

The last webpage the participants see needs to be a detailed debriefing. This needs to be written in a manner that first-term freshman can understand. You **MUST** include your contact information (email and phone) so that they can easily get questions answered. This webpage needs to be easy to save or print so that subjects can keep a copy of it.

Sample IRB protocol would look like:

"Upon completion of the study, subjects will be taken to a debriefing webpage. This webpage will be easy to save or print so that the participants can retain the debriefing for their records. (then, attach a copy of the webpage's text)

Written Debriefing Form Checklist

- Used subheads to "chunk" information. For subhead suggestions see the sample debriefing forms that follow this checklist.
- Readable font and font size, e.g. 12 pt Times New Roman, 10pt courier new
- Actual name of the study (the one on your IRB protocol, not just the state/element/tree/dog name)
- Explains any deception and ameliorates this
- Any psychological jargon is explained. For example, when using words like validity, reliability, target, condition, or words specific to your area, such as memory retrieval, Stroop, interference, you should provide an explanatory sentence. This helps us fulfill the educational mandate of debriefing.
- All acronyms are written out in full the first time they are introduced
- Language is understandable for a student with no psychology background at all (remember, many students in the HS pool are not psychology majors, and some are taking linguistics courses, and some have never had a psychology course, and many have only just arrived at college!).
- Clarity. Avoids over-generalization and vagueness.
- Relative brevity. One or two paragraphs explaining the purpose and importance of the study should be sufficient. Plus, you can print two on a page and save paper!
- Relevant information only. Students don't need to know about how you will analyze your data, for instance.
- Relevance to society, or to knowledge in a particular area of psychology; provides practical applications. Does the debriefing from explain why the study is important?

- Contains directions for how the subject can obtain further information about the study (e.g., the name, phone number, and office number of the experimenter...and the same information for the researcher's advisor if the researcher is a student or post-doc).
- Contains contact information for the Human Subjects Coordinator (hscoord at uoregon dot edu) as well as Research Compliance Services, (ResearchCompliance at uoregon dot edu) 541-346-2510

What you may also choose to include:

- References for students interested in doing additional reading
- Contact information if they are interested in learning more about your lab, perhaps for volunteering.
- Contact information for other services: University of Oregon Counseling Center 346-3227, Center for Community Counseling 344-0620, Whitebird Clinic 24 Hour Crisis Line 687-4000
- To help students not "give away" your study to other possible participants, you may want to include a section about "what it's okay to share." Students have indicated that they disregard requests from researchers to not tell others about the study IF someone asks them a direct question about the study, such as "what did you do?" If you give the students key points that are OK to share with others, you will arm them with information that will help them comply with your request to not give away the whole study.

To submit a debriefing, visit the following site:

https://oregon.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bq4RWTtb1BUyMIZ

Example Debriefing:

Background: Today's study was examining the sorts of decisions that people make in everyday life. While a lot of research has been done to see how people make many different kinds of decisions, there is surprisingly little research which looks at which kinds of decisions people make most often and care the most about.

Purpose of this study: We are hoping to better understand exactly what decisions matter to people, how people are making decisions, and what decisions people are having trouble making the right choice for. We're also interested in whether certain qualities of decisions (e.g., how hard they are to make, or how many options there are, or whether they involve other people) are related to each other, as well as what leads people to "put off" or "delay" or even "avoid" making decisions.

Your part: The part you play in this research is very important! Just giving us an idea about the decisions you've made and their characteristics helps us to understand what sorts of decisions real people are making.

Follow-up: Another important part of this research is finding out how these decisions turn out. By providing us with a description of how your decision turned out, you have helped us to predict what sorts of decisions turn out well and poorly, and what causes people to put off making decisions.

Feedback and further information: If you have additional questions about this study, please feel free to ask the experimenter, or email Famous Researcher at fresearc (at) uoregon.edu, 541-346-1234 or his advisor, Lotsa Pubs, lotsap (at) uoregon.edu, 541-346-4321. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, please contact Research Compliance Services, 677 E.12th Ave, Suite 500, Eugene, OR 97401 · (541) 346-2510, or email ResearchCompliance (at) uoregon.edu. You can also email the Human Subjects Coordinator for psychology and linguistics research at hscoord (at) uoregon.edu.

Thank you for participating!