



Psychology Undergraduate Participant Pool – Winter 2023

Welcome to the Participant Pool! Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) is committed to an experiential learning component in as many of our undergraduate courses as possible, and this starts with our Introductory Psychology courses. Rather than just reading about research, you are given the opportunity to learn about the research process first-hand by taking part in research studies. Up to 3% of your final mark in the course can come from these research experiences. Please read this document carefully to ensure you are clear on how this will work. We have included a list of Frequently Asked Questions below.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Sona?

Sona is a software program that allows participants to read about, and sign up for, studies in a secure and confidential manner. All students enrolled in Introductory Psychology courses (PSY102/PSY202) are automatically enrolled into this system and will receive their login information (separate from your D2L login) by the end of the second week of the start of the term – this will go to your TMU email account. Once you login for the first time at <https://torontomupsy.ch.sona-systems.com/>, you will be able to view the available research studies, and sign up for those that you are interested in.

Who is Sona/Psychpool?

The people who oversee the system and respond to your emails are TMU faculty members and administrative staff from the Department of Psychology. We refer to the Pool as “psychpool”.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about Sona?

All participant pool inquiries should be directed to psychpool at thepool@torontomu.ca. Students are expected to maintain professional standards in all oral and written communication. Write to us from your TMU email account, with a clear subject line, salutation, and signature (i.e., include your name). We cannot respond to email from non-TMU accounts.

What is my Sona ID?

With your login information, you will receive a unique Sona ID identifier. This numeric ID, different than your student number, is the only information researchers will have about you before you attend the session. They will not have access to your name, your email address, your student number, nor any other identifying information. It is important that you know your Sona ID so that researchers can be sure you are at the right session - and can be sure to credit you properly once completed. While you will be asked to sign a consent form at the start of the study, this will likely be the only place that you provide your name. Unless specified otherwise, consent forms are then stored separately from your data and cannot be linked back to you. Please make sure you have your Sona ID with you when you show up for a study.

I already have a Sona ID from a previous term. Can I still use that and/or use earlier credits?

No. Each term Psychpool starts over, and you will receive a new Sona ID. No information (including past credit history) is carried over. You also cannot take part in a study you completed in an earlier term.

How do I login?

Your login information will be automatically sent to your TMU email account approximately two weeks after the start of your course. In order to login, you will need to go <https://torontomuppsych.sona-systems.com/> and input the information provided in the email.

What if I didn't get my login information?

Please first ensure that you checked your TMU email account, and did not accidentally delete the message. If you registered after the first full week of the course, it is possible that you were not included in the initial enrolment period. In that case, please contact us directly thepool@torontomu.ca from your TMU email account, with the following information: Your name, your course, your section number, and the name of your instructor.

How do I know that the research is safe for me to take part in?

All of the studies you can view on the Study Sign Up page have been reviewed and approved by the TMU Research Ethics Board and/or the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. All posted studies conform to the Canadian requirements for human participant research. If you are interested, you can read more about this at: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

How do the credits work?

Credits for each study are based on the approximate amount of time they will take to complete. If a study takes less than half an hour, you will receive 0.5 of a research credit. If it takes 90 minutes to complete, you will receive 1.5 credits, and so on. The maximum allotted time for any one study is 2 hours (or 2 credits). The number of credits associated with any study is listed with the study description. If you sign up for a study but it is taking longer than it was scheduled for, you are free to leave at the scheduled end-time, and you will still receive your full credit (even if you are not done the study).

How will I know what the study is about?

You can find a list of available studies on the Sona site once you have logged in to <https://torontomuppsych.sona-systems.com/>. Under the Study Sign up section, a brief overview of the study will be visible to you, and if you would like to learn more about it, you can click on the link and view a more detailed description. This detailed description will explain the area of psychology that the study is from (e.g., Cognitive, Social, Clinical), the length of time it will take, the risks and benefits of participation, and so on. If you would like to take part, you can click to sign up. Some of the studies can be completed entirely online, and you can generally start those studies as soon as you sign up for them (online studies may have a deadline by which you need to have finished taking part, but you can usually start them as soon as you sign up, by clicking on a link). Other studies need to be completed in-person by making a visit to the Psychology Research and Training Centre at 105 Bond Street at a specific time.

If you sign up for an in-person study, please make a note of the timeslot you have signed up for and make sure to put the appointment into your calendar right away.

Why can't I see any studies listed?

Studies are visible when there are timeslots available. As some studies fill up very quickly, there may be times that fewer studies appear to be listed. Check back periodically throughout the term as new studies and timeslots are added regularly. We recommend that you do not wait until the end of the term to complete your credits; while there are sufficient slots available throughout the term for each student to complete his or her credits, there is often an end-of-term rush and all of the slots may at that point be filled. We therefore cannot guarantee that all three credits can be completed within the last few weeks of the term.

What if I can't make it to my scheduled appointment?

Please remember that, if you sign up for an in-person study, a researcher will be waiting for you to arrive at your scheduled session. If you find that you need to reschedule your appointment, you must do so at least 24 hours before the study is set to begin to avoid a penalty. To cancel an appointment, go to your list of studies under My Schedule and Credits, choose the correct study, and click 'cancel'. In addition, email addresses and phone numbers for the researcher are listed with the study information.

What if there is an emergency or I get sick and can't attend the session?

Researchers do understand that emergencies can and do come up. If you find yourself in this position, treat this as you would any other required course component. In order to avoid a penalty for not showing up (see below for further information), you should contact us at thepool@torontomu.ca as soon as possible so that we can arrange for you to drop off any required documentation (e.g. a TMU medical certificate) to the Psychology/your home Department to explain your absence. Please do not ask the individual researcher to remove the penalty. Once the documentation has been approved, the penalty will be removed and you can reschedule your session.

Is there a penalty if I don't show up for an in-person study or if I don't complete an online study by the participation deadline?

Yes. If you fail to show up for your scheduled session and do not cancel at least 24 hours in advance, or if you fail to complete an online study by the participation deadline, you will be penalized by the system. For the first missed appointment, .5 of a credit is deducted from your overall research credit total. After 2 missed appointments you will be locked out of the Sona system, meaning you will not be able to sign up for further studies nor complete your remaining credits. Psychpool can waive the penalty if you have provided sufficient medical and / or compassionate grounds for your absence. In the case of legitimate medical events, the official medical form must be used by the participant and can be found here: <https://www.torontomu.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf>.

Can I make up for a penalty by signing up for more studies?

Yes – as long as you don't miss more than one. You will still be assessed a Q5 penalty for the session that you miss, without documentation. That means that you may not be able to accumulate more than 2.5 credits for the term, unless you complete additional studies. For example, if you complete one 1.0 credit study, and then miss your next scheduled session, without documentation, your credit total goes

from 1.0, to 0.5. You would then need to complete another 2.5 credit hours, to get your total back up to 3; this results in a total of 3.5 hours of participation, for 3 credits. If you miss 2 studies, you will be locked out of the system (as above) and can not make them up.

Can I do the same study more than once?

No. You cannot receive credit for the same study more than once, even if it is during a different term. There should be plenty of other studies available to sign up for.

Can I do more studies than the ones I am using for course credit?

Yes, but you cannot receive more than 3% of your grade based on participation. If you do wish to sign up for more than 3 credits worth of studies, please contact us at Psychpool and we will adjust your account to allow you to do so. Please note, however, that you can still only use 3 credits toward your final grade in the course.

What should I do when I show up for my study?

If you sign up for an in-person study, please ensure that you are on time. If you are late, it may not be possible for you to complete the study in the allotted time, and this may result in a no-show penalty. In-person studies start at the scheduled time, not 10 minutes past the hour, as classes do. Please consider travel time to the lab when choosing a timeslot. Second, make sure you have paid close attention to where you have been asked to wait, or whether you have been asked to call a room extension using a phone in the main floor lobby. Most in-person studies will ask you to wait in the main waiting room (first floor) of the Psychology Research and Training Centre, 105 Bond Street. There is a phone in the main floor lobby that you can use to contact the research at the extension provided on the study description. It is very important that you **not** knock on doors or wander around the lab asking people where your study is, as you may end up interrupting someone else's research. Finally, make sure that you attend the correct study - know your unique Sona ID, and the name of the study that you are scheduled to attend.

What if I decide I want to leave during the study?

If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the study, or otherwise feel you would like to end your participation, you are free to do so and still receive the credit amount indicated for that part of the study. That is, if this is a 30 minute study you will still receive 0.5 credits. If this is a two-session study and requires you to come back on another date/time, but you no longer want to continue, you will receive your allotted credits for the first part, but will not receive credit for the second half. You can, however, then choose to sign up for a different study.

What if I want to learn more about the study, without fully participating?

If you decide that you would like to understand the study, but do not wish to have your responses recorded, you may ask to take part in a 'walk through'. This is not a short version of the study, but will rather take you through the full session, without you providing your individual data. You will still receive your allotted credit for a walk-through. If you decide in advance this is what you would like to do, you can let the researcher know right at the start of the session when you arrive. Alternatively, the researcher will remind you that this is an option during the consent process and you can let them know then as well.

Who will know what I said or did during my study?

Only the researchers involved in the study will see your responses. Information regarding how your individual data is kept confidential will be discussed with you when you are asked to provide your consent at the start of the session.

What happens when the study is over?

After your session, the researcher will carefully explain the purpose of the study - this is known as the 'debriefing' process. This also gives you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have. They will also give you a written copy of the debriefing form to take with you, in case you want to learn more about the research or contact the experimenter later on.

How can I be sure I got my credit?

Once the researcher has credited your participation, you will receive a confirmation email. You can also view the status of your research credits under My Schedule and Credits on the Sona website. It may take up to 48 hours before you are able to see that you were credited for your participation. If the 48 hours has passed and you do not see the credit or have not received your receipt, please contact the researcher directly to inquire as to the status of your credit. Your course instructor will not receive the list of credits you completed until the very end of the course - therefore, please do not contact him or her to inquire as to the status of these credits.

You can contact us at thepool@torontomu.ca if you have questions.