

Recruiting Research Participants



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Table of Contents



1. What is Recruitment?	3
2. Recruitment Strategies	4
3. The “Do’s” of Participant Recruitment	10
4. The “Don’ts” of Participant Recruitment	11
5. Writing Recruitment Materials	12

What is Participant Recruitment?

Recruitment is the ongoing effort made by a researcher or a study team to enroll participants in their research.

When recruiting participants for your research, keep in mind that **participants must meet the qualifications as outlined in your IRB protocol.**



Recruitment Strategies



1. The Recruitment Process
2. Print Recruitment Strategies
3. In-Person Recruitment Strategies
4. Online Recruitment Strategies

The Recruitment Process

The **successful recruitment** of study participants often involves **multiple recruitment methods** and can be an **ongoing process**.

Including multiple recruitment methods **ensures diverse population participation**. It is important to consider your population of interest, and develop recruitment materials that might work best.

Remember- all recruitment strategies and materials **must be approved by the IRB before use**.



Print Recruitment Strategies

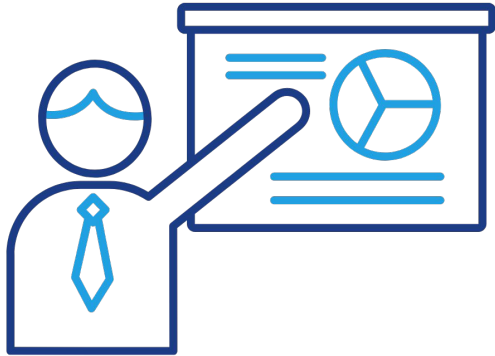
Print materials can take the form of **flyers, letters, and pamphlets**. While these materials are often a go-to, potential participants can easily ignore these items.

However, that does not mean that print materials are ineffective! When developing print materials, consider the following **guiding questions**:

- *What information should be included so that readers can understand the study, but are not overwhelmed with information?*
- *What graphics can I include to make my materials eye-catching?*
- *Is there a call to action that will inspire readers to reach out?*
- *Are my materials readable and accessible to diverse audiences?*



In-Person Recruitment Strategies



In person recruitment can be extremely effective for certain studies. In short, **go where the population of interest is!** Provide presentations, talks, flyers, or pamphlets to potential participants that explain your study and draw their attention.

For example, if you are hoping to recruit school-aged children, give a presentation at parent teacher student organization (PTSO) or parent teacher association (PTA) meetings.

Face-to-face interactions are a great way to **build trust between you and your participants.**

Ethics Amid Uncertainty

While conducting in-person research an emergency, pandemic, disaster, or unplanned event can occur without warning. **In human subjects studies, researchers are responsible for protecting the safety and welfare of participants in the research, the researchers themselves, research subjects, students, and staff.** As such, it is important to consider ethics amid uncertainty.

You should **(1) follow the study site's policies and procedures for emergency events, (2) prepare to maintain high safety and hygiene standards, (3) practice good care and stewardship of yourself and others.**

Care for you (if you are not feeling well, take care and stay home), **Care for others** (check on the welfare of your participants), and **Care for the community** (follow all safety procedures). Above all, practice ethics amid uncertainty, rely on experts to guide you, and take care.



Online Recruitment Strategies



Online recruitment is becoming more and more popular, and can include **posts on social media and websites**.

Examples of websites you might want to think about using include advocacy groups, your own institution's website, and for clinical trials, clinicaltrials.gov.

Some research teams are now using **search engine advertising** to help draw people to their study.

The “Do’s” of Participant Recruitment



1. **Do** explicitly state that participants are being recruited for research purposes.
2. **Do** identify the PI and contact information.
3. **Do** make sure that recruitment materials are readable and appropriate for your population of interest.
4. **Do** accurately state the risks of the study.
5. **Do** clearly state the purpose of the research in a manner appropriate for the population of interest.

The “Don’ts” of Participant Recruitment



1. **Don’t** use exculpatory language.
2. **Don’t** over promise benefits of the study.
3. If monetary compensation is offered, **don’t** present it as an inducement to participate.
4. **Don’t** make claims, explicitly or implicitly, that might lead a subject to believe that an experimental treatment is proven safe and effective and/or equivalent or superior to other treatments.

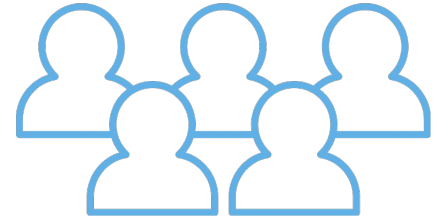
Writing Recruitment Materials



1. Writing for your Audience
2. What to Include in Recruitment Materials
3. Recruitment Examples

Writing for your Audience

When writing protocols, consent forms, assent forms, etc., researchers often **mistakenly use the same writing style in materials for both the IRB and participants.**



It is **important** to:

- **Distinguish between writing** for a general audience, versus an academic or scientific audience
- **Remove discipline-specific language** or jargon that might not be appropriate for use with participants.
- Strive for **cultural competence and sensitivity**, especially with individuals of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Use **consistent language** throughout your documents

What to Include in Recruitment Materials

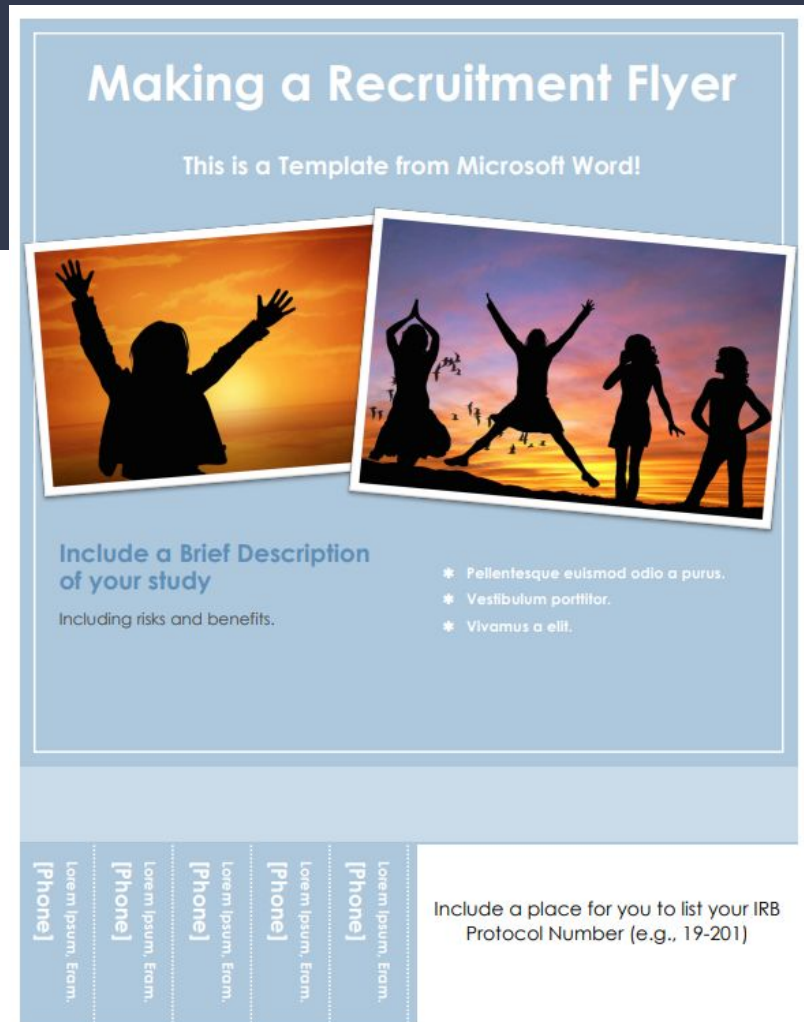
All **recruitment materials should contain**, at least, the following information:

- The name of the institution and the name of the department or division;
- The name of the Lead Researcher (and faculty sponsor, when applicable), and the name of a contact person with a telephone number to call for information about the study;
- The TC IRB Protocol number (2X-XXX);
- The purpose of the research and, in summary form, the eligibility criteria that will be used to admit participants into the study;
- A straightforward, truthful description of the benefits, if any;
- The location of the research and time commitment, if appropriate; and
- If monetary compensation is offered, it must not be presented as an inducement to participate.

Recruitment Templates

Use the following links for **recruitment templates**:

- [Recruitment Flyers](#)
- [Recruitment Letters or Emails](#)
- [Recruitment Script](#)



If you have questions or concerns about the rights of a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.