

IRB for User Studies with Games and Video

An institutional review board (IRB) is a committee reviewing research with human subjects to ensure it is ethical, protecting the rights and welfare for the participants. If we ever want to publish the results (even in a tech report, MQP or thesis), there must be IRB oversight.

The submission process is all online via the InfoEd portal. A Google search for "IRB WPI" will get you to the right page.

For the application, go to the WPI IRB exemption for a checklist: <https://tinyurl.com/u9a32zm>. Fill out that page, providing information on attachments, as necessary. Note! The IRB will usually want a draft of the consent form you plan to use, too (see below). Then **bring it back to me**. We will discuss and refine *before* submitting.

You will submit an "Request for Exemption" form (most game-related and video-related studies are low-risk and get looked over by the IRB but are deemed exempt). Exempt research still requires IRB review and approval, but is exempt from other requirements, such as annual renewal and, in some cases, informed consent.

Important! You'll need to complete CITI certification and have your file/certificate with the IRB. This is a Human subjects in social and behavioral research/basic/refresher course. The training is free once you affiliate with WPI on the registration section (ask me if you need a more detailed guide for the registration). Basically: 1) visit <https://www.citiprogram.org>, 2) click "register", 3) enter "Worcester Polytechnic Institute" and check the two boxes below, 4) click "Continue to Create Your CITI Program Username/Password", do **not** complete "Independent Learner Registration" (it does not apply and costs \$\$), 5) select "Social and Behavioral Research Investigators" (**not** "Undergraduate Student Projects"), 6) Click "Complete Registration", 7) Click "Finalize Registration", then 8) "View Courses" and finally "Start Now" to take the course.

Make sure to make **me** the PI on the application. And include **all** team members on the application.

Things you need:

- Study design: what is the research purpose, what is the game, some screen shots or a sample of how it's played. Indicate how the participants will be introduced to the game/app.
- The questions/survey you will use to gather data from your participants. Nearly all demographics and "experience" questions answered via a survey should be voluntary, not required. The only exceptions would be if the research hypothesis needs it, otherwise the user should be able to leave it blank. The questions/survey you will ask your participants. Attach the survey (Qualtrics or Google Forms, saved as a pdf).
- Number of participants you expect and who they are.
- The exact remuneration (pay) or prizes for participants.
- A "informed consent" that tells the participants about the risk/benefits and procedures. A starting template is at: <https://tinyurl.com/tt2fhhh>. The template has more than you need - you can typically get yours down to 1-2 paragraphs or at most 1 page. A brief introduction and purpose with a sentence or two on what the users will do. e.g. "You will play a game on this computer", or "You will download this game". And "testing will take 10 minutes after which you will fill out a survey that asks about your experience. Make sure to say what will be done with the data. You will remain anonymous. Be explicit that users will be informed that participation is voluntary and users can quit at any time. Add, if you have questions you can contact us at xxx@wpi.edu."

In your materials, if using a game, describe the nature of the game (what the player is doing). If using a commercial game, provide the ERSR rating. If you are using an "M" rated game, indicate that the participants will be informed of this up front (and why it has that rating). Again, a screen shot can be helpful for the IRB review, as can a link to the game publisher's page.

If you want even more details, ask me for the **irb.pptx** Powerpoint deck which has a walk-through of the submission process and Web site. Note, the deck is geared towards IQPs, but much of it is relevant to our studies.

Related: to solicit participants from WPI CS majors, the mailing lists are moderated. But you can use <https://forms.office.com/r/w4yAwzhEWd> to get your announcement on the weekly digest.