Using SONA - Department of communication Research Participation Sign-up System

STUDENT MANUAL

2021-2022 (revised August 2021)

OVERVIEW

SONA is the online system that we use in the Communication Department to manage student participation in research being conducted by communication researchers (including faculty, graduate students, senior honors undergraduates). In order to get credit for participating in research, you must use the Communication Department's version of SONA. **YOU are contributing to the research process** by being a participant in one or more studies. Please read ALL the instructions below to learn how to use the system. Please also read Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) at the end of this document so that you are prepared in advance for how to deal with any issues/questions that might come up during the quarter.

You can access the Comm Dept SONA system website through ANY of the following ways:

1) Link to it from your course GauchoSpace page
2) Link to it from the Dept of Communication website: comm.ucsb.edu (under the "Research" heading)
3) Go directly to SONA through this link: http://ucsb-comm.SONA-systems.com/

NOTE: Be sure you are using the Dept of Communication SONA site! Other departments (e.g., psychology) also use SONA, but the systems are completely separate from any each other!

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO

A brief instructional video on how to use SONA as a student is available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1OnT2ZU6QQ

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

To receive research participation credit through SONA you must do each of the following steps. We will provide more detailed instructions for each of them in the sections below.

- Use an Account: Create a new "account" for yourself at the Dept of Communication SONA website or access an existing account that you made for yourself during the last year for a previous pre-comm class (see instructions below).

- Find and Understand the Studies: Go to the SONA site to find out what studies are being offered in a given quarter, and to read the instructions for what you are supposed to do for each study.

- Sign Up for Studies: You MUST sign up in advance on SONA for any study for which you wish to get credit (even online surveys). Researchers can only grant credit to someone who has signed up for a timeslot. If you just "show up" at a research location without having already signed up to participate in a study, you cannot be awarded credit towards your participation requirement.

- <u>Monitor Your Credit</u>: If you have followed the instructions for each study, researchers will enter your credit on SONA, sometime before finals week (see below for cautions about the different kinds of studies and how to be sure to get credit).

STEP I: CREATING/USING YOUR ACCOUNT

1. Create a NEW Account

Go to the Dept of Communication SONA website and click on "Request Account".

Figure 1. Requesting an Account

Fill out the "Account Information" page with the requested information, making up your own user ID. Be sure to select ALL of the communication courses that you are enrolled in of the classes listed. **Be sure also to be VERY CAREFUL when typing in your name, perm#, and email address**. It is important that you enter your **correct perm #** (all seven digits, with no dash) as well as **email address** (SONA must email you your password to a correct address). The system will not let you change this information later, and if you enter in the wrong email address when creating the account, you will not be able to access the system later (you will need to contact the system administrator)

Figure 2. Account Information

The system will generate for you a password and email it to you. It will be something unmemorable like "6psnrFYs." Go to your email account and retrieve the password that has been sent to you. Then go back to the main SONA website/screen and login to the system with the user id that you created and the randomly generated password that was emailed to you.

You will be directed to a page describing the "Human Subjects/Privacy Policy." You generally will not be directed to this page when you access this system later in the quarter; you are only directed to this page when you open a new account. Read the information on this page, and then click "yes" at the bottom of the page. You will finally be taken to a screen where there are sections entitled 'Study Sign-Up,' 'My Schedule & Credits,' and 'My Profile.' In the 'My Profile' section, you may click on the option to 'change your password' if you prefer not to have to remember the cryptic password you were given initially. Following the instructions that appear, record a password for yourself that will be easy for you to remember.

2. Use a PREEXISTING Account

If you **already have** a Dept of Communication SONA account, because you made it for another pre-comm course and have used it within the last year, **then you DO NOT need to create a new account**. When you login to your account, you will be prompted to tell SONA what classes you are enrolled in this quarter. At the start of each quarter, all credit you have accumulated and applied in a previous quarter is deleted from SONA user accounts, and all previous course associations are also deleted. However, SONA does keep track of which studies you completed in the past and will not permit you sign up for the same ones again.

STEP II: FINDING STUDIES AND UNDERSTANDING THEIR PROCEDURES

Once you are logged in to the SONA system, to find out what studies are available, go to the '**Study Sign-Up**' section. At different times of the quarter, there may be different studies listed and/or different timeslots available to sign up for. Studies come and go all quarter long, so keep checking back to see if additional studies and/or timeslots open up. You may view studies and sign up for those that interest you and/or for which you meet any special eligibility restrictions. You may cancel your sign-up through the system as well.

1. Study Information/Instructions

Click on the study you are interested in to receive basic information about what the study is about, what it involves, how long it takes, how many credits it is worth, where and when it takes place, and, importantly, the name and email address of the researcher you should contact if you have any questions about their study at all. **As a general rule, one 'credit' is the same thing as one 'hour' of participation, but some studies may be worth more credits if they require you to come to a campus lab or involve another person in the study** (such as a classmate or parent).

NOTE that for ALL studies, it is CRITICAL that you read the FULL description of the study before you sign up! There are many important instructions for you that the system CANNOT tell you in the short study summary nor on your list of sign-up slots. If you MISS this information, and as a result do not do the study properly, you will NOT get credit! For instance,

we have had several studies whose descriptions contained the critical information that you must complete BOTH parts of the study to get any credit at all!

Study Information	
Study Name	Covid Minority Mental Health Study
Study Type	**Online External Study** This study is an online study located on another website. Participants are not given access to the Study URL until after they sign up for the study.
Study Status	**Visible to participants :** Approved **Active study :** Appears on list of available studies **Online (web) study :** Administered outside the system
Duration	120 minutes
Credits	2 Credits
Website	**View Study Website** **Instructions** You can also configure it so that participants receive credit in the system immediately after finishing the survey. If you are using Qualtrics, add `?id=%SURVEY_CODE%` to the end of the URL to make use of this feature. **Detailed Help**
Abstract	Participants (student and parent/guardian) will complete two online surveys and one discussion about their thoughts and experiences with mental health since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restrictions		
Prescreen Restrictions	No Restrictions **View/Modify Restrictions**	
Course Restrictions	Participants must be in at least one of these courses: • Communication 1 • Communication 101 • Communication 88 • Communication 89	

Additional Study Information	
Timeslot Usage Limit	200 hours (approximately 100 signups)
Participant Sign-Up Deadline	0 hours before the study is to occur
Participant Cancellation Deadline	0 hours before the study is to occur
IRB Approval Code	
Direct Study Link	https://ucsb-comm.sona-systems.com/default.as This is a direct URL for participants to access the study. You may use this in an email or study advertisement.
Date Created	January 23, 2021

Figure 3. An example of study information

2. Types of studies

a) Lab studies: These studies will require that you sign up for a timeslot for a specific place and time. If you find for some reason that you cannot make an appointment you have made, you may delete yourself from the timeslot via your SONA account as long as it is before the cancellation deadline, or you may contact the researcher directly and alert them to your situation. "No shows" are very costly to the time and space resources of the research endeavor, thus, to discourage 'no shows,' SONA will ban a student from accessing research opportunities once a student has accumulated three unexcused 'no shows' (although the participation requirement may still be satisfied by requesting the non-research alternative assignment in a timely fashion; see below).

b) Online studies: Online studies take various forms. Some online studies will request that you type your name into the survey at some point in order for the researcher to manually give you credit later.

Many, however, will probably utilize an 'autocredit' feature, which means that you are automatically credited once you click through the very last page of the survey (usually this means clicking the 'next' link on the last page of the survey). When you click through the last page, a page will briefly appear notifying you that you are being redirected, and then you will

find yourself back at the entry page to SONA, where you will see a notice indicating that you have received credit for your participation.

> **NOTE: Two critically important things about autocredit online surveys:**

> 1) You **MUST** link to the survey by clicking the URL that SONA makes available to you immediately after you sign up for the study, or (if you choose not to do the survey right away) that SONA stores for you under the "My Schedule/Credits" tab of your account. If you access an online survey by any other method, such as by cutting and pasting a URL into your browser, you will not receive credit; and

> 2) You **MUST NOT** close your browser until you have been redirected back to the SONA entry page and you see the notification you have received credit.

c) Studies with unique procedures: Some studies have some unique procedures that require that you sign-up for a timeslot merely so the researcher can get your email address, and then they will email any other procedures to you directly. For instance, a researcher might want to email you a link to an online pre-survey, and then later email you back to schedule a lab visit. In all cases, the description of the study will alert you to the nature of the study, so thank you for paying close attention to that information!

STEP III: SIGNING UP FOR STUDIES AND MANAGING YOUR TIMESLOTS

1. Sign up for a study

To sign up to participate in a study, find the study you would like to participate in (see Study Information/Instructions in this documentation). Click on the study name for more information. You will see a list of any special restrictions or eligibility requirements, as well as a contact person if you have questions about the study. If the study has a principal investigator listed, you can click their name to view full contact details. In most cases, it is preferred to contact the person listed as the researcher if you have specific questions.

After you have read all of the study's instructions/procedures and have determined you meet all the requirements, click 'view timeslots available,' and click the appropriate line under the 'Sign Up?' column.

If for any reason you would prefer NOT to participate in research, you can complete your Sona credit by doing an **alternative assignment** instead, which will also be available on the Sona system. Just as for any of the studies listed, you must sign up for this assignment on Sona, follow the instructions for how to complete and submit it, and submit the assignment by the deadline shown (usually the end of the 9th week of class).

After you click Sign Up, you will see information displayed confirming the time and location of the study you plan to participate in. You may receive an email confirmation as well, depending on how your system is configured. You are now signed up for the study. To cancel your sign-up, see Cancel a Sign-Up in this documentation.

2. Cancel a Sign-Up

If you need to cancel a timeslot you have signed up for, you can do this from the My Schedule and Credits page. Choose the My Schedule/Credits option from top toolbar.

You will see listed all the studies you have signed up for, as well as those you have completed (see the Tracking Your Progress section of this documentation for more information).

Studies you have signed up for that you are allowed to cancel will have a Cancel button next to them. There is a time limit before the study is to occur, when it is too late to cancel. This restriction may be listed at the bottom of the page or can be found by clicking on the study name and viewing the study details.

3. Manage your timeslots (including cancellations) and monitor your credits

SONA allows you to manage and track your credits and appointments under the 'My Schedule and Credits' section. However, keep in mind that (except for online surveys that employ the autocredit feature) researchers may not enter your credit immediately after you complete the study, so you also need to keep track on your own of what studies you think you should eventually be getting credit for. If later there is any dispute about what studies you've done, you'll have all the information (researcher name and email, name of the study and how many credits it was worth, etc.), so that we can help you track down what happened to your credit!

If you are in more than one class that is requiring/offering participation credit, you can shift your credit from one class to another under the 'My Schedule and Credits' section as well, if you wish. However, you may not split a credit between two courses, for example by assigning 2 credits of a 3-credit study to one course, and 1 credit from that study to another course.

WATCH DEADLINES!

Each study has its own start and end dates, but the research participation system as a whole has a hard quarterly participation deadline of **Friday, of 10th week, at 5pm (generally)**. No research participation, of any type, completed by a student after that deadline will be counted. If you have a URL for an online survey (that you signed up for but didn't do yet) stored under the 'My Schedule and Credits' tab of your SONA account, that URL will no longer be linked to the survey.

Please note, however, that this deadline just refers to the absolute last date for finishing up participation in any studies that might still be running during the last week of class. **Most studies end much earlier during the quarter**, so **you should NOT wait until that last week to sign up**, because there is a good chance that there will not be any timeslots left at that point.

For **online surveys/studies**, there is NO "timeslot" for a specific time that you are supposed to do the study. If you see a date, such as June 4 at 5pm, that is the deadline for completing the study, not your timeslot. **Once you sign up, you can do the study at any time before the deadline**. So don't wait until that time to start it!

The system usually remains open to students through the Saturday before finals week in case students wish to reallocate their credit from one course to another, but by Sunday before finals week, all student accounts are blocked and final credit lists are distributed to instructors. Students should monitor the credit they have received in their SONA accounts throughout the quarter, but particularly as we head into 10th week, because once the credit lists are finalized, they are not easily revisited.

QUESTIONS? First, consult the **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** starting on the next page. If you have any questions about a particular study, **including any crediting issues you are**

concerned about, contact the **RESEARCHER** directly (their contact info appears on SONA with their study information).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About SONA and/or the Research Participation Requirement

Q: I made an account on SONA, but I never got an email from SONA that tells me my password. When I try to make an account again, SONA says that there is already an account with my name. What do I do?

A: You probably mistyped your email address when you created your account, and SONA has sent the email to a non-existent address. SONA will not let you fix this problem yourself, so you'll need to contact our SONA Administrator (see the SONA main page for contact information). The quickness with which the administrator resolves your problem will depend on the number of such requests received (and it might help to be apologetic for making the administrator have to fix this for you!).

Q: I created a SONA account for my Psych (or other departments) class. Can I use that account?

A: No, the Dept of Communication version of SONA is a different system, so you need to create a NEW, separate account through the Comm Dept SONA website. If you do not see your Comm class listed when you login this quarter, then you are likely using the wrong SONA and will not get credit for participation.

Q: I created a SONA account for a Dept of Communication class last quarter (or some other quarter). Can I continue to use that same account or do I have to create a new account for this quarter?

A: If your account was active during the past year, then you can and should use that account again. Note, however, that when you login the first time this quarter, you will need to tell SONA which pre-comm class(es) you are enrolled in this quarter.

Q: When I created my account, I told SONA that I was enrolled in Comm 1, but then I got into Comm 87 too, and now I cannot sign up for any studies for Comm 87. What do I do?

A: SONA does allow you to add courses after you have created your account, but if you run into difficulties with this, you'll need to contact our SONA Administrator (see the SONA main page for contact information).

Q: I am taking TWO lower division comm classes. Can I apply the same study credits toward both classes?

A: No! If you are taking two courses that both have a participation requirement, then you must complete separate credits for EACH class. Note that instructors generate from SONA a separate participation report for each class, and this report only indicates how many credits you did for that class. If you are short on credit in one class because you applied too many credits to your other class, the instructors have no way of knowing what you "meant" to do. This means that YOU need to stay on top of how many credits you are applying toward each class and pay careful attention to your credits when you sign up for studies.

Q: I am taking TWO lower division comm classes, and I accidentally applied credit to the wrong class. Can I move some or all of my credit to the other class?

A: Yes, as long as you do so before the end of the 10th week (i.e., the last day of instruction, before finals week begins). Login to your account on the SONA website and follow the instructions for how to move credit from one class to another. Remember, however, that after the 10th week of the quarter, the instructors will generate their participation reports, so your credit in each class at that point will be final. You cannot wait to see what your grade would be in a class in order to decide where to apply your participation credit.

Q: When I created my account, I told SONA that I was enrolled in TWO comm classes, but I ended up dropping one of them. SONA is still telling me that I need to fulfill more credits than I really need to do. What do I do?

A: Just disregard the number of TOTAL credits SONA tells you that you need. There is no way to tell SONA that you dropped a class, so it thinks you need more credits than you really do. Your instructor will generate a report of how much credit you've done only for his/her class, so if you are not enrolled in a given class, then that instructor will of course not care that you did not do any participation for that class.

Q: I missed my sign-up time for a study. What do I do now?

A: Email the researcher to explain what happened and see if the researcher will allow you to reschedule for a new sign-up time. For many researchers, if you miss a study, you will not be allowed to reschedule for the same study, so you will now need to find another study(ies) to participate in. If the other studies are full or are no longer running by the time that you realize this, then you may not be able to complete your participation. So, it is especially important that you show up for the studies that you sign up for!

ALSO, if you accumulate more than two unexcused no-shows, SONA will lock you out of the system and you will no longer have access to the studies on SONA.

Q: I signed up for a study that requires me to come to a location on campus, but now I cannot go at that time (or an emergency came up). What do I do?

A: If it is 24 hours or more in advance of your sign-up time, you can just go online and reschedule your appointment.

If it is WITHIN 24 hours, you may or may not be able to reschedule (check the study description on SONA first), but you should at least email the researcher ASAP to explain your situation. It is particularly important to email the researcher if you have an unforeseeable emergency and cannot make your sign-up time. The researcher MIGHT be able to accommodate you or at least not bar you from the study for the rest of the quarter. If you at least make the effort to contact them in a timely manner, they are certainly more likely to want to help you.

Q: I went to the location to participate in a study, but the researcher did not show up. What do I do?

A: If you went to the right place at the right time and followed all of the instructions listed online for the study (i.e., if it is the researcher's error, not yours), then you will get your credit for the study. Email the researcher (cc your instructor on the email too), and the researcher should be able to take care of the situation quickly. IF, however, it was YOUR error, then you are back in the situation discussed above re missing a study.

Q: I have not completed my participation credit and I don't see any studies or timeslots available. I do see a non-research alternative assignment; so can I just do that instead?

A: If you wish to get your credit by participating in studies and it is still early enough in the quarter, chances are that more sign-up times will soon be available or more new studies will be opening (check SONA frequently). The alternative assignment is there for anyone who (for whatever reason) wishes not to participate in studies, so yes, you can complete that instead if you prefer and if the deadline for completing the assignment has not already passed.

Q: I am not yet 18 years old (or older). Can I still participate in studies, or do I have to do the non-research alternative?

A: If you are under the age of 18, you are not allowed to be a research participant (it is not feasible for us to solicit parental consent), so you MUST do the non-research alternative assignment to complete your credits. If you will turn 18 during the quarter, you are welcome to participate in studies at that point (you can even create a SONA account beforehand and sign up in advance for timeslots that will occur after your birthday). But we suggest that you take note of what is involved in the alternative assignment early in the quarter anyway, just in case it doesn't work out as you had planned or in case there are not enough timeslots available for after you turn 18.

Q: What happens if I do MORE than the required number of participation credits for a particular class? Will I get extra credit?

A: Not unless extra credit is specifically being offered by the instructor. There are sometimes quarters (usually only when we have a great many studies running) in which some instructors will offer extra credit for doing extra participation or alternative assignments. See your course's GauchoSpace page. However, if extra credit is NOT being offered in a given quarter (listen for announcements in lecture or on GauchoSpace), then you will NOT get any extra points for doing extra participation or an extra alternative assignment. Note also that during the same quarter, one instructor might offer extra credit while another one does not, so if you are taking more than one communication class, be sure to apply any extra participation only to the class that IS giving extra credit for it.