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1. How do I get started?

Sign up for an account at <https://mcgill-participantpool.sona-systems.com> and read the following FAQ in full.

2. How do I obtain extra credit?

Option A: You can **participate in research studies** (i.e., sign up for anything not called “alternate assignment”). For example, if you are in a class enrolled for an extra 2%, you can complete 2 x 1-hour studies or 1 x 2-hour study.

Please note that you can participate in *any* study open to you. You sign up by registering for timeslots for a particular study that interests you. You have until **April 11th, 2025 at 6 PM** to participate in studies for extra credit. **However, please note that study timeslots can fill up fast, particularly towards the end of the semester. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged to complete your credit requirements as early as possible. Plan ahead and don't leave pool participation until the last minute, as there is no guarantee that there will be studies available at that point!**

Option B: You can complete the **alternate assignment – there will be a post detailing the assignment on SONA**. If you are enrolled in a class that allows for 2 extra credits, **you must sign up for two alternate assignments to get both credits**. However, if you only want to receive 1 credit, you can sign up for just one session. However, please note there is a very limited number of spaces to complete an alternate assignment. (See also [What happens if I earn more or less than the allowed number of credits?](#))

Option C: You can also mix and match studies and alternate assignments. For example, if you want to earn 2 credits, you can participate in one study and complete one alternate assignment for your class.

Please note that, due to high demand, study timeslots fill up quickly at the end of the semester and it may therefore be difficult to sign up for a study last minute. Accordingly, please plan ahead.

3. How have the alternate assignments changed starting Winter 2025?

Starting Winter 2025, alternate assignments can only be completed in-person. There are no longer any online alternate assignments. There are several opportunities to complete alternate assignments each semester. You can get more specific information from the alternate assignment post on SONA. Each session is worth 1 credit. Because space is limited, we encourage you to participate in studies, rather than complete an alternate assignment, to earn your credits.

Unlike previous semesters, you don't have to complete an alternate assignment tied to a specific class – you will assign your alternate assignment credit to a class after you receive it.

If you need accommodations, please email

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extracreditquestions.psychology@mcgill.ca with documentation of your registration with Student Accessibility & Achievement as far in advance as possible before your scheduled session(s).

Please note that the sessions are distributed throughout the semester, and the last session happens earlier than the study participation deadline!

Accordingly, please plan ahead. You must complete the assignment within one of the established sessions to receive credit.

4. What are the deadlines I should know?

The session dates for the in-person alternate assignments are as follows:

Monday February 10th, 2025: 10:00am – 11:00am

Tuesday February 25th, 2025: 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Wednesday March 19th, 2025: 3:00pm – 4:00pm

Thursday March 27th, 2025: 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Deadline to participate in studies: **April 11th, 2025 at 6 PM**

Deadline to check and assign credits to courses: **Wednesday, April 16th, 2025 at 6 PM**

Please note that these are **firm** deadlines. No extensions will be granted.

Additionally, please keep in mind that, due to high demand, study timeslots fill up quickly at the end of the semester and it may therefore be difficult to sign up for a study at the last minute. Accordingly, please plan ahead. You will not be able to receive an extension on the alternate assignment if you are unable to find a study at the very end of the semester.

5. Do I need to submit a report after participating in a study?

Reports are only required for the alternate assignments, which are done in-person. You do not need to submit a report after participating in a study.

6. How do I complete the alternate assignments?

Completing the alternate assignment is a three-step process.

First, sign up for the alternate assignment timeslot on SONA. **Please do not sign up for a timeslot unless you plan on attending the in-person session. We encourage you to avoid signing up for the alternate assignment if you are able to do studies for credit.**

Second, show up on time at the in-person session(s) you signed up for, read the assigned article, and answer a few questions about the interpretation of the article. Note that you must answer all questions **in full** in order to receive credit. **Credit will not be given for incomplete answers or answers that do not follow the instructions.**

The participant pool TA will grant you a pass/fail grade (1 or 0 credit) within a

week of the session whenever possible, but please allow for up to 3 weeks before contacting the participant pool TA.

Third, assign the credit you received to a specific course on SONA. If you don't assign your credit by the credit reassignment deadline, you will lose its value.

If you need accommodations, please email extracreditquestions.psychology@mcgill.ca with documentation of your registration with Student Accessibility & Achievement as far in advance as possible before your scheduled session(s).

7. What level of detail is expected for the alternate assignments?

In order to receive credit for the alternate assignments, you need to answer all of the questions asked of you **in full** – i.e., you need to address **each part of each question** in a thoughtful manner. **Credit will not be given for incomplete answers.** Please follow the instructions provided by the TA during the session.

8. Do I have to do anything after participating in a study or completing an alternate assignment? / When do I assign credits to courses?

After you participate in a study or submit an alternate assignment, you will receive credit on SONA (please allow a couple of weeks for processing). **You then need to verify that the credit is assigned to the class you want to receive credit for.** The system will "guess" how you want to assign credits, but it may not assign credits in the way that you want (and sometimes it may fail to assign credit to a course at all). **Please check to make sure the assignment is correct. If you have only one course, you can't re-assign credits but you still need to double-check the credit assignment.**

Please note that Alternate Assignments need to be assigned to a particular class every time.

Credit assignment can be changed until **Wednesday, April 16th, 2025 at 6 PM.** **You are responsible for ensuring that all of your credits have been properly processed and assigned, and no extensions will be given after this date.** Again, please remember that the researchers and the pool TA need time to process your study credits/grade your alternate assignments. The sooner you participate in studies or submit your assignments, the sooner you can assign your credits to courses on the website.

9. How do I (re)assign credits to courses?

Under My Schedule & Credits, click on 'View other Credits I've earned'. Then, if need be, use the red "Reassign" button under the Course column to reassign the credit.

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Study Sign-Up

VIEW AVAILABLE STUDIES

My Schedule & Credits

- View or cancel my study appointments
- View studies I've participated in, and see if credit has been granted
- View other Credits I've earned

Study Signups

NOTE: Researchers only know you by your identity code, which is 124687, so please use that when corresponding with them.

Study	Time	Location	Credit Status	Course	Comments	Cancel?
PSYC 406 Alternate Assignment A	January 6, 2019 9:00 AM	Online	1 Credits granted on January 2, 2019.	PSYC 406: Psychological Tests		

Study Type: Online Study
Credits: 1 Credits

Reassign

Please note that as of Winter 2025, Alternate Assignments need to be assigned to a particular class every time.

Credits can be re-assigned until **Wednesday, April 16th, 2025 at 6 PM.** After that point, the credit information will be downloaded and sent to the instructors for each course. **Changes made afterward will not be considered.**

10. I haven't received my credit on SONA yet – should I be worried? What do I do?

You should receive your credit(s) on SONA within 1 week of participating in a study. If you have not received your credit after a week, contact the experimenter for the study directly (you will find their contact information on the study page). If the experimenter does not respond within a couple of business days, or if some issue or disagreement arises, please email the pool coordinator at extracreditquestions.psychology@mcgill.ca.

Please note that, due to high volume, grading of alternate assignments may take up to 2-3 weeks. If you have not received your alternate assignment credit after 3 weeks you can check in with the pool administrator. Please include your SONA ID in your email.

11. I can't see my credit information on MyCourses – is something wrong?

Please note that course instructors do not receive SONA credit information until at least the credit re-assignment deadline (i.e., **Wednesday, April 16th, 2025 at 6PM**) has passed. Therefore, you should not expect to see credit information posted on MyCourses until after this date. In some cases, depending on how your instructor set up the grades breakdown on MyCourses, your credit may not appear on MyCourses at all. If your credit is earned on SONA and assigned to the appropriate course, it will be directly applied to your final grade.

12. How do I know whether my course is participating in SONA?

If you are eligible to earn extra credit towards a course, this information will be indicated on your course syllabus. You will also see the option to select this course when you sign up on SONA. If you think that a course is missing from SONA by mistake, please contact the Participant Pool TA (extracreditquestions.psychology@mcgill.ca).

13. How do I add more courses to my account on SONA?

You can add courses to your SONA account (as long as those courses are participating in SONA) by going to “My Profile” → “Change Courses” (on the right).

14. Why do I only see the alternate assignment? Where are the research studies?

If you only see the alternate assignment on the study page, this means one of the following:

- 1) All timeslots for studies (for which you are eligible) are currently filled. **Check back regularly, as researchers often post new slots but the slots fill up fast.** Please note that it may take some time for researchers to set up their studies at the beginning of the semester, so don't worry if you don't see studies right away – they will be posted throughout the semester.
- 2) You have not completed the pre-screener questionnaire. As your eligibility for studies is determined based on your responses in the pre-screener, you will not be able to view *any* studies until you have filled out the pre-screener. Please note also that study opportunities may be limited for participants under 18. In this case, you should complete alternate assignments.

15. What happens if I don't show up for a study that I signed up for?

If you cannot attend a study timeslot you signed up for, you must cancel your sign-up on SONA 24 hours before the study start time. If that deadline has already passed, please contact the researchers to let them know that you cannot attend. It is worth it to let researchers know why you couldn't make it – this could mean the difference between an *excused* and an *unexcused no-show*.

If you fail to show up **THREE TIMES** (*unexcused no-show*) you will **NOT** be able to participate in studies of the subject pool for extra credit. However, you will still have access to the alternative assignment sessions if the last session has not already passed.

16. Where do I find the alternate assignments?

The Alternate assignment post is listed under the "Studies" tab on SONA.

17. Do I need to complete the alternate assignment in the scheduled time slot?

Yes – you must show up to complete the assignment in person. Please see the scheduled dates in this FAQ and the SONA post.

18. Do I need to go to a specific location to complete the alternate assignment?

Yes – please see the SONA post and timeslots for the building and room number.

19. Can I choose which articles to use for my alternate assignments?

If you choose to do the alternate assignment option, the TA will offer you a choice of which article to read within several options in different psychology sub-fields.

20. Do I have to complete the alternate assignment if I signed up for it on SONA?

Yes – please only sign up for the in-person session if you need it and fully intend to attend. If you know you can't attend, please cancel your signup as soon as possible. If you need to cancel within the 24 hours before the session, please email the participant pool TA to notify them as soon as you can. Include your SONA ID. Otherwise, you will be marked as a no-show.

21. I would like to participate in an online study. What do I do?

Sign up for a timeslot just like for a standard lab study. After you have signed up, **unless otherwise instructed by the researcher**, you can participate in the study at any time as long as you do it before the timeslot expires.

22. Why am I receiving the notification that “sign-up is prohibited” when trying to sign up for an online study?

Only half of your total required credits may be obtained by participating in online studies (e.g., if you require a total of 4 credits, only 2 of those credits can come from online studies). If you try to sign up for an online study that would result in you exceeding your online credit limit, you will receive the following notification:

"Sign-up prohibited. With this sign-up, you would exceed (with pending sign-ups) the maximum number of Credits allowed from Online Studies."

Solution: To earn credits, you can sign up for lab studies or combine an online study worth fewer credits with a lab study.

23. Can I divide credits from a single study session between multiple courses?

No. It is not possible to split the credits you earned from a single study session between multiple courses. Please keep this in mind before completing studies with larger credit rewards.

24. Can I carry credits over between semesters?

No. It is not possible to carry credits earned in a given semester to the next semester.

25. I participated in a study during a previous semester; why does SONA now indicate that 0 credits were granted for my participation? Does this mean that I did not receive my credit?

At the end of each semester, after credit reports have been submitted to instructors, credits are zeroed out and archived on SONA. This allows us to keep a record of study participation history but prevents students from using their credits more than once (i.e., applying their credits toward more than one course). If you participated in a study in a previous semester, SONA will indicate “0 Credits granted” under *Credit Status*, but the *Comments* section will provide a record of how many credits were earned and which course they were applied toward (see example below).

Study	Time	Credit Status	Course	Comments
Group Quest (GQF18) (2 Credits)	November 11, 2019 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	0 Credits granted on November 11, 2019	None Reassign	2.00 Credits archived record PSYC 436: Human sexuality

In this example, the student earned 2 credits that were successfully applied to PSYC 436.

26. What happens if I earn more or less than the allowed number of credits?

The maximum number of credits you can earn towards a particular course is determined by your course instructor and will be indicated on your syllabus. If you earn more than the maximum allowed amount, your earnings will be rounded down to the maximum at the end of the semester. You will not be penalized for earning more than the maximum.

If you earn less than the maximum allowed amount of credits, you will receive as many credits as you have earned.

27. Can I use a SONA researcher account to participate in studies?

You cannot access studies with a researcher account; you will need to a participant account. You can either create a second, participant account, or

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contact the Pool TA with a request to add the participant role to your existing researcher account. When making this request with the TA, **you must provide your McGill student number.**

28. What should my SONA User ID be?

Your SONA User ID is selected by you and can be anything you like (as long as it has not been taken by another student).