



DEBRIEFING GUIDELINES

Similar to free and informed consent, debriefing is an important part of the research process. For deception studies, the debriefing helps the participant to understand the true nature of the study and why they were deceived in the study. For all other studies not involving deception, the debriefing helps to enhance the *educational value* of the study for the participant. In general, the debriefing is an important mechanism in maintaining the participant's trust and support of the research community.

At the end of the participant's involvement in the study, they should:

- (a) be debriefed orally before they leave, and
 - (b) should be given a copy of the written debriefing.
- For young children, an oral debriefing is required and the written debriefing will be sent home to the parent who provided consent.
 - For online surveys, the debriefing should occur prior to exiting the survey. During the debriefing process the participant should also be given an opportunity to ask any questions about the study.

The written debriefing is ideally **one page in length** and should be written in **simple language** and using lay terms. Below is a list of points that a debriefing should include:

- A statement thanking participants for their time and participation in the study.
- Details about the study's purpose and hypotheses (i.e., what the study hopes to find), so that participants have an opportunity to learn about the research process as well as the theoretical reasoning behind the study. This description should be brief, and written in simple, easy to understand language (i.e., avoid the use of jargon, statistical terms, or highly specialized terminology).
- An explanation of how the study relates to the general topic of research and to a broader, important area of knowledge.
- A reiteration that their participation has no impact on their school results and the process in which their data will be dealt with.
- In situations where the study used deception, debriefings *must* include a clear explanation of the deception and a clear justification as to why participants were deceived.
- A statement that the study has received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board of your university or institution (if applicable) and the contact information for the Research Ethics Board (if applicable) should be provided in the event that the participant has any ethical concerns about the study.
- A statement that the study received approval from OCREAC and the school Principal and contact information should they have any questions about the research in the schools.
- The contact information for the lead investigator should be provided in the event that the participant has further questions or concerns about the study.
- Some researchers include one or two references for further reading at the end of their debriefings so that participants who are interested in the research can seek out further information, in order to learn more about the topic of study.
- For studies with more than minimal risks (or potential risks to participants), information and resources should be provided where participants can seek support or additional information, if needed.