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Consent Form Presentation Effects on Participants' Attitudes, Knowledge, & Data

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Informed consent forms' complexity has increased (Mann, 1994), but comprehensibility may have decreased. Modifications to consent form structure, formatting, and/or length could improve comprehension (Antonacopoulos & Serin, 2016; Perrault & Keating, 2018; Plaut & Bartlett, 2012). We conducted six studies (total $N = 2508$) varying some combination of source of study (faculty, student, or not specified), form length (short, long, or email), signature requirement (present or not), and form format (audio, visual, or written). We measured participants' attitudes toward the study, knowledge of consent form content, data quality (e.g., social desirability bias), time spent on the survey, and time spent on the consent form page. Participants included undergraduate students, university faculty members from across the country, laypersons from the Midwest, and mTurk workers (online participants). Overall, modifications to consent form source, length, or format had little impact on participants' attitudes, knowledge of form content, or data quality, although shorter forms had some advantages in terms of consent form knowledge. Making consent forms shorter and providing incentive to read and understand forms appears more important than form formatting (Festinger et al., 2014). These findings suggest that shortened consent forms may be used in social and behavioral research without sacrificing participant knowledge or data quality.

Eta Squared Values for All Analyses							
Variables	Source (Faculty/Student/ Not Specified)	Source (Faculty/Student)	Form Length: (Short/Long/Email)	Form Length (Short/Long)	Signature	Form Format	Average ES (η^2) <i>Weighted by N</i>
Study	Study 1 and Study 5	Study 2	Study 1 and 3	Study 4 and 5	Study 2	Study 6	
Attitudes Towards the Study	> .01 .02 > .01	> .01 > .01 > .01	> .01 .02*	> .01	> .01	> .01	>.01
Knowledge of the Consent Form Content	> .08*** .01 > .01	> .01	.03*** .06***	> .01*		.01	.02
Data Quality (Social Desirability)	.01 .01 > .01		.01	> .01		.01	.01
Time Spent on Entire Survey	> .01 .02		> .01				.01
Time Spent on Informed Consent Form Page				> .01			>.01

• $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$
 • Note, each η^2 value represents the value associated with a single main effect or interaction in an ANOVA.

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