

IRB Guidelines and Suggestions for Using Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for Social/Behavioral Research Projects

1. Acquaint yourself with MTurk by visiting Amazon.com and reading about MTurk features.

Amazon's Welcome Page:

<https://requester.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>

Amazon's Advanced "How To" Guide:

<http://docs.amazonwebservices.com/AWSMechTurk/latest/AWSMechanicalTurkGettingStartedGuide/>

Amazon's FAQs:

<https://requester.mturk.com/mturk/help?helpPage=main>

2. Understand the privacy and confidentiality limitations associated with using MTurk.

Amazon's MTurk Privacy Policy:

<https://www.mturk.com/mturk/privacynotice>

**Note the information in sections "Information You Give Us" and "Automatic Information," which outlines information attached to MTurk worker data such as internet protocol (IP) address, social security number, bank account information, etc.*

Recent Findings Regarding Loss of Privacy to MTurk workers:

<http://www.utexas.edu/news/2013/03/27/amazons-online-workforce-not-so-anonymous-after-all/>

**Note that Amazon.com has stated that the MTurk platform is NOT meant to support participant anonymity. MTurk worker IDs are linked to Amazon.com public profiles. Amazon.com may disclose worker information. Additionally, worker information may be available to others (who submit a request) for tax reporting purposes.*

3. In light of privacy concerns, develop IRB materials that inform study participants about how their MTurk worker IDs will be retained and used for study purposes. Additionally, create the study design to reduce privacy risks to participants.

Suggestions to consider for Informed Consent Procedures and/or Study Documents:

- Add a disclaimer statement that any work performed on MTurk can be linked to the user's public profile page. Thus, workers may wish to restrict what information they choose to share in their public profile. Consider referencing Amazon.com's warning to workers: <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/contact>

**This warning pertains to any contact made between workers and you (as the work "Requester"). This warning states, "Your email address will automatically be inserted into the message so the Requester can reply to you." Amazon.com inserts the workers' name as well. Therefore, it is possible that when a worker makes contact with you that their name and e-mail address will be included.*

- Add a statement in the consent document explaining that MTurk worker IDs (i.e., the 14 character sequence of letters and numbers used to identify workers) will NOT be shared with anyone.
- If there will be study compensation, add a statement in the consent document that MTurk worker IDs will only be collected for the purposes of distributing compensation and will not be associated with survey responses (if applicable).
- Required IRB Proposal Document – add in the “privacy and confidentiality” section that MTurk worker IDs will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team, will be removed from the data set, and/or will not be linked to survey/study responses (as applicable).