# Assent Procedures

Assent is an active affirmation of a desire to participate and differs from consent which is recognized as being granted from an individual with the legal authority to do so. When children/minors under eighteen are involved in research, informed consent must be obtained from the parent/guardian ***and*** assent must be obtained from the child/minor. Similarly, participants for whom the ability to give informed consent may be otherwise compromised, such as individuals with developmental disabilities, must be afforded the same process.

Assent should be administered in a manner that is easily understood by the potential participant (either written or verbal) and should be limited to a one-page format. The individual should be given explanation of the proposed research procedures, the purpose of the research, and any discomforts, in language that is appropriate to the individual’s age, experience, maturity, and condition. Illustrations might be helpful and larger type makes it easier for some individuals to read.

If an assent procedure is to be used, a prototype of the ‘script’ of this procedure should be included in the appendices of the application. Whereas an assent ‘script’ may not be appropriate considering the age range or cognitive capacity of some subjects, researchers should nonetheless provide a description of the measures they will take to assess whether the individual assents or is comfortable participating, such as explaining how they will interpret non-verbal cues like crying or fatigue.

***A particular subject’s capacity to assent must be evaluated on an individual basis***. Keep in mind that your tone, facial expressions and body language may influence a child's assent!

*We have provided some Assent Form templates for your assistance. While you are not required to use these templates, you may find them helpful in constructing your assent procedures. The first template represents an assent script that might be used for adolescents and which provides room for more detail regarding the study purpose and procedures. The second template represents an assent script that might be used for younger children. The third template represents assent procedures that describe how a researcher might interpret non-verbal cues.*

**You may use the templates on the following page as guidance.**

**Sample Assent Form (adolescents)**

My name is [researcher name]. I am interested learning about [insert topic of study in simple language] because [explain research purpose in age-appropriate language]. If you would like, you can be in my study. I would like you to take part in some discussion groups that will meet for about \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ a week for the next \_\_\_\_\_\_ weeks. I would like to ask some questions about your experiences and feelings and how you think these things affect how you feel about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will [explain all tasks and procedures clearly and simply].

[Explain the risks and benefits in clear, simple child-friendly language. The benefits must outweigh the risks]

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other [children, teens], so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it’s OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s OK. You can stop at any time.

If you don't feel like answering any questions, you don't have to, and you can stop speaking with me anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now or when we are talking together. Do you want to take part in this project?"

**Sample Assent Form (young children)**

My name is [researcher name], and I am learning about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I would like you to (take part in a game) (answer some questions) that will take \_\_\_\_\_ minutes. I would like you to [explain tasks in simple language] and/or tell me how you feel about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you don't feel like playing, you don't have to. You can stop at any time and that will be all right. Do you want to take part in this game?

**Sample Assent Procedures (infants)**

To ensure that infants are comfortable to begin testing, care will be taken to allow infants to acclimate to the testing environment. Parents will remain with their child at all times and will be able to monitor their child’s mood throughout all study activities. Testing will be discontinued if for any reason infants become tired or fussy. All tasks are relatively brief, and breaks will occur in between tasks as necessary to prevent fatigue.