Informed Consent Guidelines

- Each informed consent form should be tailored specifically to the research being conducted.
- Avoid “boiler plate” or “canned” statements that may come off sounding so legalistic or so semantically confusing that they obscure the point being made.
- Pay attention to readability of the form. Will it be clear to the individuals whom you wish will participate in your research? One can set Microsoft Word to calculate a document’s readability automatically.
- Check for typos and/or misspelled words. Have a trusted colleague read over the form to check for errors you may have missed.
- Use at least a 12 point font and number the pages.
- Explain the purpose and procedure for the study in nontechnical language. Avoid abbreviations and jargon. Define any terms that may be new or unclear to subjects.
- Be sure that the time frame for subjects’ involvement is spelled out clearly.
- Avoid directive language such as, “You understand that this research project will require two hours of your time on a weekly basis.” Restate such as follows: “Individuals who take part in this research project will be required to be actively involved for two hours every week”.
- Briefly explain how illness, discomfort, or injury will be reported and dealt with during the research project. Avoid any statements that imply legal compensation or can be interpreted to assume liability on the part of the university.
- Be sure to state clearly how all information on informed consent documents and other collected data will be kept confidential, will be maintained, and when and how it will be destroyed.
- Be certain that all signatures are legible or have the person print his/her name under the signature.
- Indicate that the research participant will receive a copy of the signed consent form.
- Ensure that the names and contact information (phone number and email address) for the primary researcher and IRB are on the informed consent form.