**Deception and the Consent Process**

Deception becomes problematic for the informed consent process because at some level the participant cannot be fully informed for the study to work.  However, the IRB requires the following for the consent process in a deception study:

* **The consent form is not part of the deception**. Although your description of “What you will do” will not have the entire detail of the study, you should provide as much information as possible.  The information provided on the consent form should be true information, not information that supports the deception.  If there are elements that may make a person uncomfortable or put them at any physical risk, you should warn participants, even in vague terms.
* **Consent is an on-going process.** Even though a participant has given their okay to participate, monitor their progress throughout the study. If there are signs that the participant is becoming upset or frustrated, check with the participant to see if he or she still wants to continue.
* **The participant is provided with a**[**debriefing session**](https://www2.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs/resources_guide_deception_debrief.html)**,**[**debriefing statement**](https://www2.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs/resources_guide_deception_debrief_statement.html)**, and**[**post-debrief consent form**](https://www2.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs/forms_consent.html)**after the study is complete**.  At some point in the study, usually after their participation is complete, participants must be made aware of the full nature of the study and the deception involved.  The IRB requires that you provide a debriefing session with the participants to explain the study.  As part of this session, you should provide a debriefing statement which outlines the full nature of the study. As part of the debriefing session, make sure that the participant is okay, that he or she is not showing signs of emotional distress, etc. For a benign deception, most participants likely will not be upset, but more intense deception activities may require an in-depth debriefing process. After the participants are fully debriefed, you are required to provide a post-debrief consent form which asks for participants to again consent to participate in the study.  Participants have the option, after learning the true nature of the study, to decide not to allow their data to be used in the study.
* **If the participant withdraws from the study prior to the study’s completion, he or she still receives the debriefing period**. Regardless of whether a participant completes the study, it is important that they are fully informed of the nature of the study. It is appropriate that you provide a withdrawing participant with a debriefing form and they should receive the same debriefing process given as if they completed the study. If the consent form states that the data will be destroyed if a participant withdraws, the participant will not need the post-debrief consent form as their information will be removed from the study anyway.  If this is not in the consent form, you should provide them with a post-debrief consent form.