



NOTES FROM THE AMAZON MECHANICAL TURK TUTORIAL

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by Selin Kesebir

What is Amazon Turk? (www.mturk.com)

Amazon Mechanical Turk is a marketplace for online work. “Requesters” post tasks and “workers” complete the task in return for small amounts of money.

What capabilities does it offer to social scientists?

- Participant recruitment (from a large pool of participants)
- Study design tools
- Data collection
- Participant compensation

Is Amazon Turk a good source of data?

Researchers have evaluated MTurk for the quality of data and compared it to other platforms. They found:

- MTurk participants are slightly more representative of the U.S. population than are standard Internet samples and are significantly more diverse than undergraduate samples
- Compensation rates affect data collection speed but not data quality
- Data obtained are at least as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods

Buhrmester, M. D., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (in press). [Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality data?](#) *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.

Mason, W. & Suri, S. [A Guide to Conducting Behavioral Research on Amazon's Mechanical Turk](#) (October 12, 2010).

How to run a study on Amazon Turk?

STEP 1: Create an Account

- You might want to create an account that is distinct from your regular Amazon account
- The full name you enter will show up as your requester name. You may want to pick something different from your real name (e.g., Marketing Researcher, Johnson Lab)
- Company name can be anything (e.g., University of Virginia)

STEP 2: Design a HIT

Start with the Design tab on top. Choose a Template.

Enter Properties Page:

- Title: Make it short and informative (e.g., “10-12 minute Psychology Study”)
- Keywords: survey, study, experiment, psychology, questionnaire, science
- Criteria: specify desired approval rating, location
- Payment will affect pace of data collection but not quality

Design Layout Page:

Two options:

1. You can use MTurk templates to design your entire study. You won't have too much flexibility unless you are a programmer, but you can easily create simple studies by modifying the template as if you were editing a Word file. If you want to do that, the “Blank Template” and “Survey” are good template choices to start with because they have multiple question types. Note that you might need to change variable names on the HTML code when you have copied and pasted questions. You can do so by clicking on “Edit HTML Source”.
2. The option commonly preferred by researchers is directing participants to an outside study page (e.g., Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey)
 - If you want to do that, first, create your study on a different site. At the end of your study, ask participants to create a completion code and to enter the code on MTurk. This code is needed so that you can link MTurk data to your study data and approve/reject work. [See Appendix for sample instructions to include in your study]
 - “Basic Open-Ended Question” is a good template to start with to design a HIT directing participants to an outside study. Edit the template to give basic information about the study [see Appendix for three sample design templates]
 - It's a good idea to ask participants to open the survey in a new tab/window, so that they won't have difficulty navigating back to the MTurk page to enter their completion code
 - Include a box for participants to enter their completion codes. You might also add a box for comments.

STEP 3: Publish a HIT

- Before you can publish a study, you will have to prepay the full amount of your HIT (pay per assignment X number of assignments) into your MTurk account.
- To charge your Darden research account for MTurk expenses, contact Accounting Manager Lisa Layne. She will enter a purchasing card into your account. To do that, you will need to have an IRB approval number.

STEP 4: Manage your HIT

- Review work, approve good work, reject subpar work
- Sometimes, you'll see that a participant has completed a HIT in less than 10 seconds. Before rejecting the work, check the worker's data. It's most probably because the participant completed your study before she accepted the HIT.

- You can contact individual workers by clicking to the “Manage HITs individually” link, clicking on “Review Submission”, and then clicking on the worker ID
- To accelerate data collection, you can repost your study by cancelling a batch and republishing it. This will send your study to the beginning of the available list of studies.

RESOURCES

MTurk’s resource center for requesters:

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

FAQs by Amazon:

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

A guide to use MTurk for online studies by a grad student (who authored the article evaluating MTurk):

<http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/Students/Buhrmester/MTurk%20Guide.htm>

Demographic info on Turkers (from February 2010):

<http://behind-the-enemy-lines.blogspot.com/2010/03/new-demographics-of-mechanical-turk.html>

Advice on running studies on MTurk:

<http://blogs.parc.com/blog/2009/07/experimenting-on-mechanical-turk-5-how-tos/>

APPENDIX: Sample Text asking participants to create a code

[Exit this survey](#)

IMPORTANT

In order for us to compensate you for your time and effort, we need you to make up a 5 digit completion code number, enter it below first, and then again on MTurk.

***Please make up and enter a 5-digit completion code number (e.g., first 5-digits of your phone number). We ask you not to choose 12345. Please make a note of this number if you think you'll have trouble remembering it, as you'll have to enter the same number on Mechanical Turk again after submitting this survey.**

PLEASE REMEMBER TO ENTER THIS CODE INTO THE MECHANICAL TURK PAGE AFTER SUBMITTING THIS SURVEY ON THE NEXT PAGE. OTHERWISE, WE WON'T KNOW THAT YOU COMPLETED THE SURVEY AND WE WON'T BE ABLE TO COMPENSATE YOU.

APPENDIX: Sample Design Template 1 for a study using SurveyMonkey.

Psychology Study

Note: This HIT is periodically re-posted. If you've already completed this HIT previously, please do not complete it a second time. You will not be compensated a second time.

You are invited to participate in a psychology study. In this study you will answer some questions about yourself and make some interpersonal judgments. The study will require about 10-15 minutes of your time.

There are no anticipated risks in this study. The study may help us understand how people make various judgments. You won't be asked any questions that could reveal your personal identity and your responses will stay entirely confidential.

You will be offered 26 cents for your time and effort. If you have questions about this study, e-mail sk8dm@virginia.edu. If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact Tonya R. Moon by e-mailing irbsbshelp@virginia.edu.

If you agree to participate in the study, please open the Surveymonkey link below in a new window or tab (since this will allow you to easily navigate back to this page):

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7SQKFGJ>

At the end of the survey that you'll find at this address, you'll be asked to make up a five-digit completion code number and enter it on this page. **FOR US TO COMPENSATE YOU, YOU HAVE TO ENTER THE SAME NUMBER BELOW AFTER COMPLETING THE SURVEY, AND THEN HIT SUBMIT.**

Please enter the 5-digit completion code that you made up and entered at the end of the survey you just completed, and hit SUBMIT. Please also make sure that you hit the DONE button at the end of the survey you completed.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX: Sample Design Template 2 for a study using SurveyMonkey.

Gift Survey

Note: This HIT is an academic study being conducted by university researchers. It is not being conducted for commercial purposes or to make profit, and it won't be sold or used by a company or marketers. You don't have to write any papers/essays or search the Internet on this HIT. It's just opinion questions, so please take your time to answer the questions honestly.

Requirements:

- * Must be 18 or older

Payment:

- * \$.20

Here is what you do:

1. Accept this HIT BEFORE doing the survey
2. Open the link at the bottom of the page in a new window
3. Answer the questions on the survey (we have tricks to see if you are reading, so please read everything or do not do this HIT)
4. Enter the exact information that you are told to enter on the last page of the survey in the box below. Follow the instructions! You must get this correct!

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7SQKFGJ>

APPENDIX: Sample Design Template 3 for a study using SurveyMonkey.

Versions of this survey have been posted previously.

*If you have **previously completed any survey with this title**, please do not accept this HIT.*

You will know quickly whether you have completed a survey on the same general topic, and if so, please return the HIT.

Participate in a survey for a research study. You will be asked to fill out a survey about you and your choices and reasons. It should take approximately 5 min. All of your responses will be completely anonymous. You will be paid 25 cents for accepting this HIT and finishing this task. You must be **18 years or older** and a **US Citizen** to participate.

Please click on the link below or copy and paste the url into a NEW window:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DL9D2RV>

At the end of the survey, you will be asked to create a secret code.

To get approved, you **MUST** enter your **secret code** here.

Please do not enter 12345!

If you have any further questions or comments, please enter them in the box below.