

Department of Geography: Paying Research Subjects

If you intend to pay research subjects, UW has a [few options](#) for doing so. They all have advantages and disadvantages though, so this is an overview of what each process looks like to help with your planning. Know that gift cards are a popular topic for auditors, so we need to do our best at complying with all of the rules.

All of the options require you to complete and submit a [Research Participant Log](#).

Option 1: [Tango Gift Card](#)

Process: Parwati will order Tango card links. A rewards link will be sent to Lindsay, who will distribute the link to the PI. The PI will then have access to a spreadsheet with unique links that can be emailed to each research participant. This spreadsheet should not be shared. Research participants will click on the link and [choose which gift card they would like](#).

Advantages:

- There are a variety of gift card vendors for the research participant to choose from
- There are no fees on the gift cards
- The gift cards never expire
- You can see if a research participant has redeemed the card. Read [here](#) for more.

Disadvantages:

- Research participants need an email to access gift card
- PIs individually email rewards links to each research participant and must keep accurate records of which link was sent out to which research participant

Option 2: [US Bank Visa Cash Card](#)

Process: Parwati can order multiple US Bank cards at a time. It will take 3 days to process and then an additional 5-7 days to get mailed to the Department.

Advantages:

- Cards can be reloaded with money
- Cards can be used anywhere Visa is accepted (not for cash at an ATM though)
- It is a physical card that you can give to someone

Disadvantages:

- There is an expiration date on each card, usually valid for 2 years
- There is a \$3.00/month fee that deducts from the card after 6 months
- Once cards are shipped to the Department, Procurement is not responsible for undelivered or lost orders

Option 3: [Check](#)

Issue a check (or direct deposit or Zelle) to research participants (non-UW employees).

Advantages:

- No fees!
- Flexible for folks that prefer to get cash

Disadvantages:

- More information needed upfront for Parwati to process (Legal Name, Address, Tax Information {if paying \$600 or more}, and Payment Type)
- Foreign nationals are automatically subject to 30% tax withholding

Updated August 2023

- We can generally use this method once; if you need to pay an individual more than once, they'll need to register as a UW vendor if there are more expected payments.

Option 4: [Field Advance](#)

Process: This is used when conducting research in remote areas where payment methods like check and credit card are not accepted and research participants have to be paid in cash.

This is not preferred! We will do this if there are no other options.