

Obtaining Assent Process by Age

Obtaining assent from children or youth as research participants means that the researcher is obtaining the agreement of the child to participate in the research.

Although age is used as the primary criteria to determine the appropriate procedure for obtaining assent, factors such as literacy and mental development must be considered. A single procedure for obtaining assent may not be appropriate for all potential subjects, investigators should be prepared to use different approaches with different participants. The general chart below was developed to aid researchers in selecting the correct process for their target age group(s).

Age of Minor	Form of Assent	Parental/Guardian Consent Form
Infant to under 2 years old	No Assent Process	Required
2 – 6 years	Modified Assent Process (Oral script or visual depiction*)	Required
Age 7 - 12	Provide a written assent form to child. The following options may be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assent form delivered orally by researcher, with verbal assent from the participant documented by researcher 2) Written assent form (with appropriate readability) reviewed by child with a signature documented on the form 3) Video assent process (e.g. YouTube video) 	Required
Age 13 - 17	Written Assent with signature of participant The following options may be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assent form delivered orally by researcher, with verbal assent from the participant documented by researcher 2) Written assent form (with appropriate readability) reviewed by child with a signature documented on the form 3) Video assent process (e.g. YouTube video) 	Required

Obtaining Parental Consent

Additionally, because children cannot legally give consent on their own behalf, consent of their parent(s) or a legal guardian(s) is required before children and youth can participate in research projects. The following is the guideline for whether one or both parents/guardians need to give consent for children as research subjects.

- If the proposed research involves no more than minimal risk, the consent of one parent or legal guardian is required.
- If the research is federally funded and involves greater than minimal risk, permission must be obtained from both parents, unless there is only one available parent/custodian, or when only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child. (Please contact an IRB staff member for more information.)

*For a more complex study, with numerous components, a visual resource, such as a PowerPoint might provide an easier process for a young child to understand your study in pictures, instead of verbally.

Credit: University of Nebraska at Kearney IRB