

Releases for Images and Recordings – Frequently Asked Questions

What is a release?

A release is a mechanism that allows you to own and use another person's image or voice in specified, public ways. It usually consists of a form that subjects sign giving a researcher permission to use their voices and/or images. In some circumstances, for example, when subjects are not literate, it may consist of an audio recording or film of the subject's permission.

Should you photograph or film your subjects?

Some projects require photographs or videos to accomplish the research objective, for example, *Reflections of Emotion in Faces of Differing Ethnic Backgrounds*. However, most research projects do not need images of subjects to answer the research question. Images are identifiers and have the potential to compromise subject confidentiality, so think very carefully about whether to film or photograph your subjects.

When is it not necessary to obtain a release?

1. It is generally not necessary to obtain written releases to take photographs in public places, such as a town square or park. However, there are exceptions. For example, photographing people as they leave a needle-exchange clinic would create images that reveal private, identifiable information even though the setting, a street or square, is public.
2. If you are recording an interview, solely for the purposes of making an accurate transcript and will not make the recording publicly available by placing in an archive or collection for others to use.

When do you need a release?

Releases should be obtained from research subjects for any of the following uses of identifiable images:

1. Presenting them in classes, poster-presentation, or conferences, on or off campus.
2. Posting them on the Internet, including personal social media sites.
3. Giving them to an organization that collaborated in your research for public dissemination.
4. Using them in an article submitted for publication or posting them on a blog.
5. Submitting them to an archive or special collection available for public use.
6. Including images in a senior honors thesis or independent study project that will be housed in a WSU library.

What are the basic components of a release?

1. The researcher(s) name and affiliation with WSU
2. A title for the research that is sufficiently descriptive to identify the study
3. A description of the material to be released
4. A list of ways you want to use the material

5. A statement that signing the release is voluntary. In other words, subjects may decide that, although they gave you permission to photograph or tape them, they don't want you to use their images or tapes after all.
6. The subjects agreement: written, recorded, or oral, depending upon the circumstances
7. Parental permission if the subjects are minors
8. Child assent if the subjects are minors

What do you need to say in your consent form about the release?

You need to:

1. Ask for permission to make images or recording that you will own and use in public ways
2. Explain that you will ask them to indicate how you may use the images and recordings, after their participation in the study.

For example:

"I hope to produce a collection of essays about what I have learned. With your permission, I would like to take your photograph to accompany my essays. Also, I would like to be able to convert my writing and photography to electronic format so that I can share it with people who are interested in this topic, such as at a conferences. I may also give the essays with the photographs to a WSU archive for public access. As you can see, there are several ways I could use your photographs. At the end of the interview, I will give you a form called a release and you can indicate how I can use the photographs I took of you."

How do I get permission to photograph and film children?

If you want to photograph individual children, you need to get parental permission to do so.

The following text is an example that allows parents to make decisions about how their children's images may be used. For some populations you will need to reduce the reading level and for others it might be appropriate to write the release in a more professional style. The important thing is to think through all the possible uses of the material for which you need permission and include them in your text.

I permit (researcher name) to use photographs of my child (name of child) taken as part of (title or description of study) for my research project and to copy the photograph for use in the following ways.

(Please check the boxes to let us know which uses are OK.)

__Put up an exhibit of the photos at a WSU gallery

__Put the photos on-line for other research and teaching purposes. This means that people all over the world could see and copy the photos.

May we use your child's name with the photos? Yes __ or No __

Child Assent

Even if parents have provided permission for children to be photographed or filmed, children need to assent.