

# Incentives for Research Participants

Incentive	Pros	Cons	Comments
<b>Checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best for when it is truly a reimbursement*, not thank you or incentive</li> <li>Can be voided and reissued if needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has to be customized to the participant; can't "stock up"</li> <li>More time consuming/employee time to write and track</li> </ul>	*Reimbursement for travel expenses incurred is not earned income requiring SSN
<b>Physical Gift cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less administrative time (can "stock up" ahead of time)</li> <li>Trackable</li> <li>Simpler for tiered, ongoing incentives as a study progresses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be lost/misplaced</li> <li>Some expire</li> <li>Who to pick? Food? Retail? Coffee? What would be more suitable for your study population?</li> <li><b>There may be a limit on how many cards from each retailer can be purchased on one credit card</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Electronic gift cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideal for survey or distance-based studies where the coordinator and participant never meet in person</li> <li>Trackable</li> <li>Ideal for staggered incentives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less useful for non-online, traditional shoppers</li> <li>Not effective for those without email addresses, laptops, or smartphones</li> <li><b>There may be a limit on how many cards from each retailer can be purchased on one credit card</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tango offers 180+ businesses and options to donate to charities; useful if you don't want to commit to one retailer, however people need to create</li> <li>Tango cards can be ordered on UW budgets</li> </ul>
<b>Cash</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great for "one-and-done" encounters with participants on the spot</li> <li>Good for participants with address/availability struggles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most fiscal departments require extensive documentation/co-signers (more employee time = more cost too)</li> <li>Risk of theft or loss</li> </ul>	
<b>Visa cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can use anywhere that takes Visa; feels closer to a cash payment than a retail-based card</li> <li>Can be ordered on UW budgets</li> <li>Can load cards when needed</li> <li>Easier for participants who are less web-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six months after the cards are <b>loaded</b> they will start to "leak" funds if not used</li> </ul>	

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## Best practices

- ❖ For information on UW policy and resources related to research payments: <https://finance.uw.edu/ps/how-pay/research-subjects>
- ❖ Each department has their own requirements for providing and documenting patient incentives; it's helpful to work with them early on, before you commit to the type of incentive.
- ❖ For gift cards, if you're providing different dollar amounts over the course of the study, consider setting the amounts as a multiple of a single dollar amount.
- ❖ The type of incentives used and dollar amounts may change over the course of the study; you may want to avoid listing specific gift card vendors by name in the IRB protocol and consent form.