UCLA **Research Administration**
Human Research Protection Program

Tip Sheet: Online Survey Protection Considerations
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Brief Overview

Most reputable study platforms, such as Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey, already provide some detection and protection features from online bots. If additional protections are needed for online bots and survey speeders, the summary below are some recommendations and tools on how you can protect your online survey. Additional protections can include designing a survey to catch bots and speeders or using different technology resources to filter out bots.

Survey Design

- Add questions that check whether a survey taker is actually paying attention. For example, insert the instruction "Ignore the rest of the content of this passage and select the second response option" in a long question. Those who select anything other than the second option would then be flagged.

- Ask the same question at two separate points and check for differences in responses.

- Add questions that direct survey takers to skip one or more questions that are not applicable to their circumstances. Those who did not skip questions would be flagged.

- Embed eligibility question checks within the survey to catch people who do not fit into your inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Use Technology

- Prevent "ballot-stuffing" by tracking IP addresses to prevent your survey from being completed more than once from the same IP address.

- Provide a personal link for each participant to the survey and ensure the link can only be used once.

- Use Completely Automated Public turing Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart (CAPTCHA) or reCAPTCHA to prevent bot response.

- Include "honeypot" questions that are embedded in the survey. Human participants will not be able to see these questions; however, bots would see these questions and respond to them.

- Use metadata to track study time stamps for impossible dates and times.

- Prevent search engines from finding/indexing your survey. Search engines work by creating what is called an index, or a map of all pages on the internet so they can be searched quickly. With the prevent indexing option, you can keep search engines from finding your survey and presenting it in their search results. If your survey is created

using [Qualtrics](#), for example, the prevent indexing is selected by default under the survey options.

- Conduct a pre-screening survey prior to launching your survey, in order to filter out bots.

- Put the survey on a site that requires a unique username and password for each participant.

References and Tools

- [Survey Monkey: Filtering Survey Results](#)
- [Qualtrics: Survey Protection](#)
- [Qualtrics: Response Quality](#)
- [Qualtrics: Fraud Detection](#)
- [Prolific: Bots and Data Quality on Crowdsourcing Platforms](#)
- [Prolific: Researcher Help Centre](#)
- [Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk): Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [Behavioral Scientist: How to Battle the Bots Wrecking Your Online Study](#)
- [SurveyLegend.com: How to Prevent Cheating in your Surveys, Technologies, Best Practices, Ideas, and examples](#)
- [IPQualityScore.com: Fraudulent Survey Responses? 8 Methods to Prevent Market Research Fraud](#)
- [Jibunu: Preventing Bad Data](#)