Using Mturk
(And Online Survey Software)
for Mass Communication Research

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Step 1: Create an Account as a Requester
Step 2: Click on the “Create” tab
Step 3: Click on “Survey Link:
Step 4: Set up your HIT (Human Intelligence Task)
Step 4: Set up your HIT

This is where you decide how much to pay. I have found luck with $0.50 for questionnaires lasting up to 30 minutes, but have paid up to $1.10 for more extensive experiments.
Step 4: Set up your HIT
This is where you decide how many participants you want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting up your HIT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reward per assignment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tip: Consider how long it will take a Worker to complete a task. A second task that pays $0.05 is a $0.00 hourly wage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of assignments per HIT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many unique Workers do you want to work on each HIT?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time allotted per assignment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum time a Worker has to work on a single task. Be generous so that Workers are not rushed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIT expires in</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum time your HIT will be available to Workers on Mechanical Turk.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results are automatically approved in</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>After this time, all unreviewed work is approved and Workers are paid.</td>
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(Advanced)
Step 4: Set up your HIT

This is where you set how long participants have to work on your hit. Give them more than enough time, but not hours and hours. I usually stick to one hour for a 30-minute experiment.
Step 4: Set up your HIT

This is where you set how many days your HIT will be posted on MTurk. It’s easier to give yourself a few extra days than to post a whole new batch, so I suggest giving at least a week for a 30-minute questionnaire, more if a longer study.
Step 4: Set up your HIT

Personally, I don’t have time to approve every single HIT, and I’ve found most users take the whole questionnaire and rarely leave even one question blank. So, I usually set this to automatically approve HITS in 24 hours. You can approve them one-by-one if you want (see Mturk page for more info).
Step 4: Set up your HIT

When you are done setting up this part of your HIT, be sure to click “Advanced” before moving on.
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced

Now, click on “Worker requirements”
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced

You don’t want Masters. So instead, click the dropdown box and select “Customize Worker Requirements.” There, you can remove the Masters requirement and make your own stipulations.
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced
Change the Masters requirement to a “Location” requirement. Make it “is” and “UNITED STATES.”
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced

I usually set HIT Approval Rate to 90%, it’s still high but a little less restrictive (which helps you get participants more easily)
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced

I usually set Number of HITs Approved to 50. That way you don’t get first-timers, but you also don’t get as many people who take surveys for a living. I’ve found it a good balance point.
Step 5: Set up your HIT - Advanced

Just click “OK” here. Master Workers are more important for very mechanical or complex tasks, not for social science research.
Step 6: Design Layout

This is where you edit the content of the project description. I usually give a general Project Name, like “Reactions to News Stories.”

![HTML editor interface for designing project layout](image)
Step 6: Design Layout

This is where you give a brief description of what participants will have to do in your study. Tell them if it’s reading or video-based, and about how long it will take. This is also where you insert the link to your Qualtrics or Survey Monkey questionnaire.
Step 6: Design Layout

Notice the text about having to provide a code. Be sure to put in the last page of your survey a place for Mturk users to 1.) enter their Mturk ID number; and 2.) Give them some number they need to enter back into this window when they are done. That’s how you know they actually took your questionnaire.
Step 6: Design Layout

Side note: I always, without fail, get emails from Mturk participants telling me they accidentally entered their Mturk number on this page instead of the survey code. At that point I go into Qualtrics to double-check they’re telling the truth, then I tell them to wait 24 hours and they will be approved despite their mistake.
Step 6: Design Layout

Mturk will then show you a preview of what potential participants will see. If you are okay with it, click “Finish.” If you see something you need to change, click on the “Design Layout” tab to fix it.
Step 7: New Batch

At this point, you’ve only set up your HIT, but you haven’t launched it. You need to go to the Create tab and click on “New Batch.”
Step 7: New Batch
You’ll see another preview. If it still looks good, click “Next.”
Step 7: New Batch

Now you’ll see the details and the costs to you. Mturk charges a fee, so make sure you have enough in your prepaid HITs account to include the fee as well as participant expenses. If you do, then you can go ahead and publish your HITs!
Step 8: Add Money to Your Account

Oh wait, if you’re like me, you probably didn’t have enough money in your Amazon account to cover everything. But it’s super easy to add money. At the top of the screen, at any point in this process, click on “Account Settings” to add money to your account. I often wait until the end so I know exactly how much the fee is and don’t put in too much money.
Step 8: Add Money to Your Account

Click on “Prepay for Mechanical Turk HITs”
Step 9: Publish HITs (if you haven’t already)

• There you have it! Now you are up and rolling. Click on the “Manage” tab (next to the “Create” tab) if you want to check up on how many workers have completed your HIT.
Other Thoughts

• These steps are what have worked for me, you might need to alter them for your specific project. I do mostly quantitative, between-subjects or mixed-design experiments using Qualtrics. If you do something else, you might have to tweak the procedures.

• You will get a more diverse pool as far as race, ethnicity, and age go than you will using students. BUT, you will get a fairly well-educated pool, and often more men than women (another difference from using students). Think about your topic and how those sample characteristics might impact your outcomes.
Other Thoughts

• Really familiarize yourself with the Mturk interface before publishing your first HIT. I suggest participating as a worker in three or four studies before doing your own. That way you can get a feel for what works and what doesn’t.

• Your knowledge of your online questionnaire software is also crucial. For instance, if you are using Qualtrics for an experiment with video stimuli, you might want to include some open-ended questions to be sure to capture if there is some sort of glitch in the video player (as well as richer qualitative responses to your stimuli). That way, you can go in and see if someone didn’t get to watch the video but filled out the rest of the questions anyway, and you can drop that participant from your analysis.
More Thoughts

• Keep in mind that many conference and journal reviewers are not familiar with Mturk. So, when writing your paper, be thorough in describing your methods and your sample characteristics. Include as many demographic questions as you can in your questionnaire so that you can show reviewers what your sample looks like. I often include current state of residence and education level in my questionnaire, in addition to other typical demographics.

• Also, be sure to cite the growing number of studies that show Mturk to be a valid source of research participants (you can easily find these studies through a quick Google Scholar search)
Final Thoughts

• Mturk can be a fast, cheap, and effective way to get a diverse sample for social science research.
• Always be sure to double-check all your settings in Mturk and Qualtrics/Survey Monkey before publishing a HIT.
• If you have questions, shoot me an email and I will try to assist. But, I’m a self-taught user, by no means an expert. I’ve found Google searches are also good places to find answers for Mturk issues.
Final Thoughts

• Have fun, and happy researching!