# Internet Research Guidelines

Computer- and internet-based methods of collecting, storing, utilizing, and transmitting data in research involving human participants are developing at a rapid rate. As these new methods become more widespread and become a more popular medium in research, they present new challenges to the protection of research participants in the behavioral, psychological, and social sciences.

The CSU IRB has developed guidelines to assist researchers plan, develop and implement internet-based research protocols that address the same risks and provide the same level of protection as non-internet based methods of research involving human participants.

How can you determine if your internet project needs to come to the IRB? An online research activity (e.g., using an online survey instrument, analyzing information posted on Facebook, analyzing questions/ responses from online support groups) must meet two basic criteria for it to require IRB review:

It must be **(1) research** and it must involve **(2) human subjects**.
Determining if a project is defined as Research is no different if it is an online or face-to-face study (see [45CFR46.102](http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.102) or a [summarized statement of the federal definition of research](https://www.research.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/is-my-project-research/)).

Whether an online project involves human subjects depends on the federal definition of human subjects:

***A living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains:***

1. ***Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, OR***
2. ***Identifiable private information. Private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information) in order for obtaining the information to constitute research involving human subjects.***

***45CFR46.102(f)***

## For specific questions, please link to these Internet Research Guidelines:

* Private Sites
* Public Sites
* Social Networking
* Using the Internet to Conduct Research (e.g., online surveys)
* Virtual World Research