Hints for organizing participant days

1. Timing

First, ask PhDs and staff for experiments. Depending on how many experiments are proposed, you can decide how many people you can invite. In order to not waste time, limit the time to one week or so. Make sure they provide enough (better too much than too less) information about requirements regarding equipment, participants, and a rather detailed estimation of running time.

Second, invite participants via the EMS newsletter, Facebook, flyers. Same procedure here, give them a week (usually you’ll be booked out earlier) and ask for enough personal information (see template). Assign an ID to each participant and use it from then one instead of the name, so that you can handle further contact with them, all at once without violating privacy matters. For planning purpose within the department you can of course keep the names (PhDs should know who to test). Make sure not to invite too many people. At some point put (if they are willing to) on the waiting list. Usually some people cancel on short notice, so that you can compensate quickly. The maximum number of people depends on how many experiments are going to be run, how many labs will be used, and the general procedure of the days ( how many experiments per day per subject, how many days per subject, etc). As a guideline keep in mind that we have 13 behavioral cubicles (8 in K1f46, 5 in K2F71), 4-5 eye trackers (35,37,38, soon one in K2F71, one in K1F46), 2 EEG labs. However, some labs are more popular than others, e.g. barely anyone wants to use K2D35. Keep this in mind. In case of emergency you might be able to use some cubicles in K2D30 (social psy), but don’t rely on that

After you collected all experiments and participants prepare the schedule. The best way to do this (in my opinion) is first , trying to get an overview about everything. How many eye tracking studies per lab, same for eeg, and other experiments that require a certain location, preferences of participants: which days are most popular, how many don’t want to do eeg, shock, etc. And this kind of stuff. If you think you have a good overview you can start planning.

You should do this by going from the most restricted ones to those with most freedom. In this sense, you can start with eeg and shock. Hint: Try to assign subjects that can’t to do certain kinds of experiments, to other ‘special’experiments they did not mention (e.g no shock?-->EEG, no EEG?-->eye tracking, and so on) by doing this you make it yourself easier to avoid conflicts in the end. After having finished all the ‘specialties’, try to handle behavioral experiments. First, for all others, and lastly for yourself. Since you will have most experiments of all, you have the most freedom. Therefore, it is recommendable that you use yourself as emergency experiment. If possible leave one room free in your lab, so that you have a buffer, if something goes wrong somewhere. Also, it is good if you assign the exact experiments per subject on short notice (Of course the timeframe should be detailed, but it doenst matter whether subjects to study 1 for 60 mins, or study 2.) . You can decide than which option is best for everyone.

After you finished send it first to the PhDs, fix the issues they found and then send it out to the participants (keeping anonymization in mind). Then fix the issues they find, replace subjects if necessary and be happy if everything works so far (do it know, you won’t have reason for it later).

1. During the days

What you do here is pretty much your decision . However, be aware that you’re the one responsible for everything and you’re probably also the one that has the most insight into how things works (I hope at least). Therefore, you’re the first person to go to, in case something is not working out. You can prepare for this in 2 ways:

1. Be as flexible as possible. Try to weight the importance of the studies (it is easier to find a replacement for behavior, than for eye tracking). Master your schedule
2. Prepare as much as you can before the actual testing starts. E.g. start the experiments in the cubicles, hang out schedules, provide as much information to subjects/phds as possible. Try to seem super strict and not Easy going at all (while staying polite). If you don’t do this, people won’t care for rules.

In the beginning the job will scare you, but you get used to it and then it also will become easier (not easy!).

Good luck