Guidance in Choosing the Correct Consent Form Process for your Human Subjects Research

The Research Integrity office has noticed that there appears to be some confusion when researchers are developing consent forms to use for their studies. Based on this we would like to clarify what FAU's IRB considers to be acceptable ways of obtaining informed consent in research studies. The first step is to think of informed consent as a "process" and not just a document. With this in mind consider that consent can be obtained in several ways depending on your data collection method as well as the risk associated with your study.

Consent can be in the form of:

1) A verbal script of what will be spoken to the participant, or
2) A written consent form to be signed by the participant, or
3) A written consent paragraph or cover letter that will not be signed by the participant, such as text preceding an anonymous data collection instrument (ideal for low risk paper & internet surveys with appropriate justification)

Depending on the complexity of your study and the procedures involved, sometimes a combination of consenting methods can be appropriate for your methodology. The important thing to remember is that you, as the researcher, have options.

Please take some time to review the IRB policy on Informed Consent at http://www.fau.edu/research/research-integrity/irb-policies-and-procedures.php

Templates for various methods of informed consent can also be found within IRBNet, under the Forms and Templates area. IRBNet can be accessed by going to http://www.irbnet.org.