Initiating an fMRI Study
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This document describes how to get your scanning experiment underway. At this point, you have an experiment, and you're ready to start scanning. It's not that difficult. You just need to know who to contact.

IRB

First things first. Double check with the lab manager that your experiment is approved to scan. This shouldn't be a big deal, but just make sure. Also make sure that we have enough money.

Modifying your behavioral experiment

You need to modify your experiment to be compatible with the scanner. You can use whatever set up you already have (e.g., matlab, psychopy, jspsych). All that really needs to be done is to have the script accept an '=' (or '+=' in matlab) to begin the experiment. Stephanie McMains (smcmains@fas.harvard.edu) can help you set this up, if you have any questions.

Personnel

Figure out who is going to be involved in scanning. At least one of the primary investigators on the project should be a green badge. If this isn't the case then make sure you have a deal with a green badge in the lab or plan to acquire a green badge yourself promptly. Keep in mind you need two green badges to scan on the weekend or after hours (i.e., before 9am, after 5pm).

Piloting

Tammy Moran (tmoran@fas.harvard.edu) will give you a free slot for piloting your experiment. Contact her to set this up. This is helpful to grab your first fMRI data for the project to make sure your experiment runs fine on the scanner.

Scheduling your scan

You need to log into this website to schedule your scan (Bay 1 MRI scanner): https://webapps.sciences.fas.harvard.edu/spinal/calendar/monthly/cbs-mri-bay-1-mri/

There are a couple ways to go about this. The conservative approach is to get a subject (through some prescreening process—potentially sona) and then schedule a slot. You can prescreen them over the phone, then schedule a spot while you have them on the line and are looking at the

schedule. With a bit more fortitude, you can schedule your scans in advance and then find subjects to fill the slots. Sometimes this is necessary when the scanner is really busy.

Keep in mind that once you schedule a scan you can't cancel your booking of the slot. You can only sell it if someone is willing to purchase it.

Recruiting

If you're recruiting directly from the Sona study pool, then you have to got through the same steps as posting a behavioral study. See the reference for creating a behavioral in-lab study.

Timing a scanning session

The subject spends about an hour in the scanner during a standard session—that includes structural, functional, and any other scanning procedures. It's standard book the scanner for an hour and a half. That allows the researcher enough time to set up plus a margin of error. It also usually makes sense to tell the participant to come 30 minutes before the scanner is booked. That allows time for any instructions and paperwork, having the subject change into scrubs, and is a nice buffer if they're late. In total, that's a 2 hour session. Our standard pay for that two hour session is $35. That's $25 for the hour they're in the scanner, $10 for the rest of the time (commensurate with a regular in-lab experiment).

Running a session

See the document on scanning session protocol.