Are you planning to use survey software with a free license (e.g. Survey Monkey and others)?

When students conduct research, they often look for free survey software. Some companies provide free licenses that seem to offer useful tools without raising ethical concerns. However, using such free software can pose serious data protection risks.

It's only if you look at the fine print of the free licenses that you may realize that you are ceding to the company partial or full intellectual property of the data, which means that they have the right to store it, use it for marketing purposes, or even sell it to third parties - even if elsewhere they promise not to give your email to third parties, for instance.

If you don't have access to a paid license that has better safeguards, there are still two solutions that BCIT's REB has found acceptable:

1. Contact the LTC for a temporary license
2. Use Lime (see guide below)

Make sure to note what software you use in your ethics application.

Using LimeSurvey Free Version for Student Research: Privacy & Security Guide

Important Considerations Before Starting

- **Free version limits**: 25 responses per month
- **Data storage:** On LimeSurvey's servers in Germany
- **Best for:** Small-scale research projects
- **Alternative options:** Consider Microsoft Forms through your BCIT student account

Setting Up Your Account Securely

1. Account Creation

- Use your institutional email (@my.bcit.ca)
- Create a strong password (combine uppercase, lowercase, numbers, symbols)
- Enable two-factor authentication if available
- Update password regularly (every 60-90 days)
- Website: https://www.limesurvey.org

2. Privacy Configuration

- Log in to your LimeSurvey account.
- Click on your profile icon (top right corner).
- Select "Account" > "Privacy settings".
- Adjust the following settings:
  - ✓ "Usage Statistics" → Set to "No" (disables sending usage data to LimeSurvey).
  - ✓ "Survey Data Sharing" → Set to "No" (prevents LimeSurvey from sharing survey data).
  - ✓ Uncheck any options related to "Improving Services" or analytics tracking.
  - ✓ Disable "Cookie Tracking" if available.
  - ✓ Enable "Anonymous Responses Only"
  - ✓ Disable IP address storage
  - ✓ Turn off all tracking features
  - ✓ Make sure the website address is secure by checking that it starts with "https://" (not just "http://"). The "s" means it's secure and your data is protected. Look for a padlock icon in your browser's address bar as well.
  - ✓ Review LimeSurvey's privacy policy and terms of service
  - ✓ Set notification preferences to receive alerts about privacy policy updates

3.Social Media Protection
- When you see "Connect Account" or "Link Account" options for, Facebook, Google, Twitter, LinkedIn, or any other social platforms, **always select "Skip" or "No Thanks"**
- If you accidentally connected any accounts, go to "Connected Accounts" in setting and remove them immediately
- Avoid using "Sign in with Google/Facebook" options even if offered

4. Secure Session Management

- Always end your session properly:
  - ✓ Click your profile icon
  - ✓ Select "Log Out" (don't just close the browser)

- Use private/incognito mode when accessing LimeSurvey to:
  - ✓ Prevent your login information and survey data from being stored in the browser
  - ✓ Reduce the risk of unauthorized access, especially on shared or public computers

- Never select "Remember Me" or "Keep me logged in"
- Clear browser history after each session:
  - ✓ **Chrome**: Press Ctrl+Shift+Delete
  - ✓ **Firefox**: Press Ctrl+Shift+Delete
  - ✓ **Safari**: Press Command+Shift+Delete
  - ✓ **Edge**: Press Ctrl+Shift+Delete
  - ✓ Select "Clear browsing data "including cookies and cache

4. Regular Privacy Check (Set a calendar reminder for monthly review)

- Log in to your account
- Go to "Settings" > "Privacy"
- Check for any new options or changes
- Review all sharing settings
- Verify "Data Collection" is still disabled
- Check "Connected Accounts" is empty
- Review recent account activity for any unauthorized access

4. Managing Survey Data

- Download responses promptly after collection
- Store on password-protected and encrypted devices only
- Delete from LimeSurvey servers after downloading

Distributing Your Survey

- Always use BCC when sending email invitations
- Avoid public Wi-Fi for survey administration
- Never share your survey administration link with anyone not involved in the research
- Set a clear survey expiration date and close access after data collection

Troubleshooting and Support

- For technical issues: Contact BCIT IT Services Help Desk
- For research ethics questions: Contact BCIT Research Ethics Board

Remember: When in doubt about data privacy, always prioritize caution and consult **BCIT IT Services,** the **BCIT Research Ethics Board** or your instructor.

Note: This guide is meant to help minimize privacy risks while using LimeSurvey's free version. For research involving sensitive data (e.g., health information, vulnerable populations), please consult your instructor about using institutionally approved platforms with enhanced security features.