

How to Make \$1000 a Month With Focus Groups

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It's possible, and I've done it many times



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Please note: I have no personal affiliation with any companies listed below.

As a writer and freelancer, it's not uncommon to have several income sources; the more the merrier. The best side hustles usually do not require too much time and additional effort. This is *exactly* where user tests and focus groups shine!

I got into focus groups as a kid. My mom signed me up for a consumer study where I judged toys. The recruiters put me into a smaller group with seven other kids, and we tested different versions of a board game marketed to our demographic.

It lasted a little over an hour; I got some soda and cheese sticks with ranch, then I got to go home. As an incentive, I got a \$50 gift card for Toys R' Us, and I spent it all on Barbie accessories for the new year. Pretty neat! From then on, I was hooked.

Focus group recruiters are looking for everyday people to test products, give their opinion, and get paid for them. You can earn anywhere from \$1 to \$350 per group in cash, cash cards, or gift cards. I have even heard of some studies that run for several months and participants receive over \$1500 in incentives.

I was once on a lucky streak where I landed between five and seven focus groups in a month. As a result, I made at least \$1000 that month. I don't know why I was so lucky, but it's a numbers game in general. Keep applying, and eventually you will get picked.

Don't worry if you don't hear back from several studies you've applied to. It will happen eventually. Remember, it's not you that they reject; it's usually that they have met the quota for your particular demographic for that particular group. Here are my best tips:

Sign up for established focus group companies

Make sure to get on their mailing list. Some examples include:

1. <https://www.Recrutandfield.com/register-as-a-participant>
2. <https://Focusgroup.com>
3. <https://www.Fieldwork.com/join/>
4. <https://www.Schlesingergroup.com/en/get-in-touch/join-our-panel/>
5. <https://Join.2020panel.com>

Sign up for new and emerging companies

There are always new research groups emerging, and like any new platform, it is easier to get studies with them because they have fewer participants registered. Remember, research groups are nothing without participants, so sign up for as many as possible.

To combat getting rejected because your demographic got filled, fill out a screener for a potential study as quickly as possible, and stick to topics that apply to you. Don't sign up for the Salesforce study if you don't regularly use it or the Bath and Body Works one if you never

use shower gels. It will be impossible to pass the screener about something you know nothing about, and it wastes everyone's time.

Don't forget internet studies

Many people don't know that even before COVID, about half of all consumer research groups were conducted entirely online. Some of these range from surveys to panels or just questionnaires. They usually run from a few days to a few weeks and pay via Tango gift card or PayPal.

Don't get on a recruiter's s*** list!

Answer the questions, don't hem and haw, and make sure to show up to the group early. Recruiters are usually on tight deadlines to find the client's preferred demographic. So they rely on you to show up and participate. Often, if they like you or you are considered reliable, they will invite you back to future groups, sometimes without even filling out additional screeners.

Do not cancel at the last minute, be courteous, and you should have nothing to worry about.

Pro tip: Show up early for the raffles

I once was on a winning streak where I won four raffles within two months because I was always the first to show up.

Make sure you fill out all given screeners Usually, there will be an initial screener and a follow-up screener over the phone. The follow-up screener ensures your answers are consistent with the information you provided in the initial survey.

Make sure the answers are the same in both instances.

Things to remember when filling out screeners

- Err on the side of providing positive responses to questions.
- Remember, companies WANT you to buy their product and to be someone who already believes their product or their competitors' products are at least good.
- The same company sponsoring the study is usually hidden in plain sight within the questions they ask you. Sometimes they will ask you about a particular company several times. Other times just once.
- Be honest, but if you're a generally negative type of person, think about your answers from the clients' view.

Filter through Craigslist for the most reliable types of groups, which are generally psych studies and user testings. In addition to focus groups and online panels, many universities run psychology studies by students for non-invasive medical studies. These can involve

doing an assortment of tasks, from asking you questions about your mental health history to having you watch videos to test your responses.

I like psychology studies because they don't require invasive blood draws or the MRI machines that medical studies do, and I find the theories the psych students are testing interesting to be part of. Plus, you get to help a doctoral or a Ph.D. student with their required coursework to help them graduate and influence science for the future.

All while you are getting paid!

Make a template of frequently asked questions.

Filling out multiple screeners daily can be unbearably repetitive. They will all ask similar demographic information and then ask the same questions in ten different ways. This is how I've made it easier for myself — After filling out hundreds of screeners for various focus groups, I've noticed that they generally ask you an extensive set of repetitive questions and then throw a curveball question toward the end.

The curveball question is to see how you express yourself, and they mostly want to know that you can string together a coherent response. They want to make sure you can articulate yourself reasonably well when you come to the study. That isn't the issue, though. After answering 100 multiple choice questions, you don't want to write a long, detailed paragraph about something unrelated.

That's why I've built a template library of stock answers to these questions that I store in a Microsoft note.

The best way to deal with these is to make sure that every time you have to answer these questions, you copy and paste the answer into a Onenote or Evernote until you have an answer to all of them and then reuse them each time you're asked!

The question will usually start like:

This one's just for fun! • Imagine you're hosting a dinner party, and you can invite three famous people, living or dead, to come. Who would you invite, and why? Please be descriptive.

- What are some of your main hobbies or passions?
- If you received \$100,000 as an advance to write a book, film, or movie about something significant to you, what would it be? Please describe it.

Make sure to find out how and when you will be paid beforehand

This is best for your records, and make sure you haven't accidentally signed up for an unpaid group. Before moving forward, ask the recruiter what the incentives are and how participants are paid.

I remember showing up to a group in Brooklyn, the group was overbooked, and the pay wasn't going to come for three weeks. Because the group was overbooked, they allowed me to go home with incentives. Though I was happy to go home, I was disappointed that I was temporarily leaving with nothing. Make sure to ask when payments are made because they should usually be on the same day as the group, but if the checks come in the mail, that should be stated beforehand.

The most common forms of payment are 1. Amazon Gift card (sent electronically)

2. Visa gift card

3. Cash

4. Store-specific gift card

Most importantly, have fun!

I have used a VR headset, received countless gifts, makeup, and perfumes for free. I tested tv shows before their release and got a lot of free food for my valuable opinions. Focus groups, user interviews, and online panel money have come in a pinch when I needed it, and the groups themselves have added value to my life.

Try some sites out and have fun!

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