

## Subject

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**subject** *n* - [ME, fr MF, fr L *subjectus* one under authority & *subjectum* subject of a proposition, fr masc & neut, respectively, of *subjectus*, pp of *subiere* to subject, lit to throw under, fr *sub-* + *jacere* to throw] [general] One under authority or control of some institution, such as the state, eg, a subject of the United Kingdom. [research] 1. **study subject** (defs 1, 2, 3, and 4) 2. An animal under study in a laboratory or other experimental settings (not common usage). **Usage note:** The term is widely used in research involving human beings, especially in settings emphasizing the experimental nature of some **investigation**, procedure, or **treatment**. The primary difficulty with the term as a generic label for a person being studied in the setting of **trials** has to do with the implication that the person is being *used* as a research object. Further, the term carries the connotation of subjugation and, thus, is at odds with the voluntary nature of the participation and requirements of **consent**. In addition, it carries the connotation of use without **benefit**; a misleading connotation in many trials and, assuredly, in most **treatment trials**. Even if such a connotation is correct, the term suggests a passive relationship with study investigators when, in fact, the relationship is more likely to be akin to a partnership involving active cooperation. Avoid by using more humanistic terms, such as human being, person, patient, or participant. If used at all, limit to settings where participation is for the sole benefit of the investigation and does not carry **benefit** (other than remunerative) for the person being studied.