

Goal

To gain experience with applying Nielsen's heuristics to critique user interface designs by performing a small but detailed heuristic evaluation.

Overview

In the following two assignments you will perform a Heuristic Evaluation of the Coursera Discussion Board. Please use the Coursera website for this assignment (not the app).

As you go through the interaction, you will reference Nielsen's heuristics continuously, looking for places where the Discussion Board interface fails to comply with the heuristics (and perhaps a few places where it does). For example, ask yourself with each interaction if the system status is clear (#1), if there is a good match between the system and real world in terms of language and metaphor (#2), etc. Wherever you find a violation, write down a brief description, which heuristic(s) were violated, and if possible take a screenshot (needed for the second assignment).

Example

Here is one example of what you might record for a violation (tip, using a spreadsheet is a good technique for recording your notes):

[UX503x-HeuristicEvaluation-Spreadsheet-Example.xlsx](#)


UX503x-HeuristicEvaluation-Spreadsheet-Example.pdf PDF File

After compiling your full list of violations, go back through and see if any of the violations are duplicated or could be combined. For example, if the "link" icon described in the example violation above were to appear in more than one screen, it would be better to list this as a single violation (though being sure to note the various places that it occurs) than to keep it as a single violation.

Next, go back through and assess the severity of each violation, using the scale introduced in the Heuristic Evaluation video lecture, namely:

1. = cosmetic problem
2. = minor usability problem
3. = major usability problem; important to fix
4. = usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

It is best to do this after you have recorded all of the violations, so that you can calibrate your scale accordingly. After adding severities, one row of your table might look like this:

Description	System Location
<p>"Link" icon in the formatting toolbar is not clear and may not make sense to some users. The "chain" icon is a more common representation, and does a better job of invoking the "link" metaphor than a globe with an arrow.</p> <p>Screen shot: </p>	<p>"Add a Post" screen</p>

As a final step in working with the table of violations, organize the table in decreasing order of severity, so that the most severe violations are at the top and the least severe are at the bottom.

Once you have your table of violations, you can move on to preparing your assignment submissions. There are two separate assignments that build on one another. For the first assignment, you will simply turn in the table of heuristic violations/usability issues you found following the organization and formatting guidelines provided. For the second assignment, you will write a report highlighting and going into more detail about the highest priority issues that you identified.

Note: Please try to submit your heuristic evaluation assignments early in the week to leave enough time for peer grading.

Click ahead to the next page to see instructions for testing the interface.