Guidelines for Observers

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Running a successful usability test requires observers to adhere to strict guidelines so participants feel comfortable and willing to share information. To make sure your presence as an observer does not cause discomfort to participants or otherwise a affect the quality of the data we collect, please observe the following rules:

- **Arrive before the session is scheduled to start**.
  It is important for you to be present when the participants arrive. Participants may interpret your lateness as disregard for what they have to say, and a stranger entering the room is distracting and disruptive. If you arrive late, please wait to join the next session.

- **You must stay for the duration.**
  We would like participants to forget that anyone else is in the room. Having people coming in or going out of the room is very distracting. Therefore, once a session has started, it is imperative that you stay until the session is complete. If you cannot stay for the duration of a session, please do not join the session.

- **Turn your cell phone off** (or leave it at your desk).
  If you bring your computer, turn off sounds, email, or instant messaging. It's a short session. Please be fully present and ready to pay attention to the moderator and the participant.

- **No talking, laughing, grunting, aha-ing, or using distracting body language.**
  Participants may think you are laughing at them. Please do your best to keep as quiet as possible. It is important that observers do not make facial expressions or utter comments during the session.

- **Ask open-ended questions during the participant debriefing** (after the session).
  Wait until the participant is taken to the debriefing room before asking questions. Don't over-design or feature alternatives. Avoid asking about preferences or opinions.

- **Keep the participant's identity confidential.**
  We have promised the participants that their identity will be kept confidential. Please help maintain this confidentiality.