

Meet Emily

Posted on January 29, 2014 by [Whitney Quesenbery \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/) | [Leave a comment](#)

Emily is one of the personas from our book, *A Web for Everyone* (<http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/>). Personas combine research data from many sources into a fictional but realistic character. They are a great way to make sure your team considers the diversity of needs among visitors to your site.

You can download an overview of all eight personas from our [Resources page \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/). The personas images, created by Tom Biby, [twofinechaps.com \(http://twofinechaps.com/\)](http://twofinechaps.com/), are available on Flickr. Tune in for a new persona every Tuesday until all eight are posted.

Emily: Cerebral palsy, living independently



"I want to do everything for myself."

Emily is determined to do things for herself, so she's tried a lot of different keyboards and joysticks over the years, looking for the right kind of interaction. Speech is difficult for her, so she uses a communications program with speech output.

It's slow for her to type with limited use of her fingers. She has stored many phrases and sentences, and can make the program speak for her more easily.

The iPad turned out to be one of the best solutions. Mounted on the scooter, it's always within reach, and touch works better than a keyboard and a joystick. In some situations, it can replace her older communications program.

Instant messaging and social media have also been great. The short formats work well for her, and text can be a more comfortable way to communicate than speech. Her latest discovery is an app that scans the area to show her what shops and restaurants are in each direction. "I look like a dancing fool spinning my scooter around, but it saves me a lot of time finding someplace new."

Simpler screens are easier screens

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For Emily, simplicity isn't just a nice-to-have, as she explains in Chapter 3. "I love having a tablet computer. It's small enough to go everywhere with me. However, being small can also mean that the whole page gets small and crowded, and that makes it harder for me to use the site. I can't tell you how often I've gone zooming off to the wrong link or couldn't hit the right button. The ones I like seem to have everything in the right place. It's like they read my mind and put the things I need on the screen when I need them."

Tell me what I need in advance

It's not that hard to delight Emily. Just don't disappoint her, as happened in this story from Chapter 9. "When I go online, I just want to do things like everyone else. Most of the time, my disability doesn't slow me down, but when you mix having to get around in the real world with online forms, it can be a perfect storm of annoying barriers. Today, I'm trying to sign up for a seminar at my college. Why can't they tell me all the documents I'll need before I start this process? I got the form filled out, but when I went into the office this morning, I discovered that I needed to bring other documents with me. The online form didn't say anything about it. The whole trip was a big waste."

Snapshot of Emily

- 24 years old
- Graduated from high school and working on a college degree
- Lives in a small independent living facility
- Works part-time at a local community center

The A's: Ability, Aptitude, Attitude

- Ability: Cerebral palsy, difficult to use hands and has some difficulty speaking clearly; uses a motorized wheel chair
- Aptitude: Uses the computer well, with the right input device; good at finding efficient search terms
- Attitude: Wants to do everything for herself; can be impatient

Assistive Technology

- Augmented & Alternative Communication (AAC) with speech generator
- iPad
- Scooter with joystick control

The Bigger Picture

Source: Harris Interactive/National Association on Disability, "The ADA, 20 Years Later" July 2010, United Cerebral Palsy/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

- 800,000 children and adults in the U.S. have one of the forms of cerebral palsy.
- People with disabilities are often unemployed or underemployed. Among all U.S. working age (18–64) people with disabilities, only 21% are employed full- or part-time.

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