

Usability Testing for Technical Writers

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agenda

1. about usability and usability testing
2. tips for better testing experience and results
3. examples from testing documentation with users

usable

that can be used

convenient or easy to use

usability

a quality of a thing that shows how fit, convenient,
or easy to learn and use that thing is

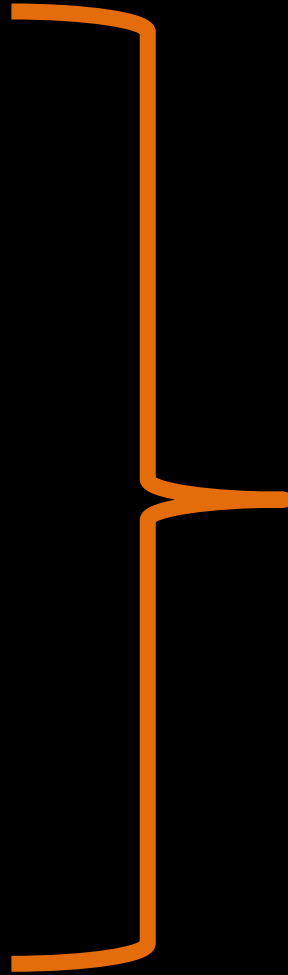
for particular **people** in a particular **context** for a
particular **task**

usability testing

a way to evaluate, with the help of users, how usable the thing is

types of usability testing

- formative
- exploratory
- A/B
- remote
- 5-seconds
- walkthrough
- card-sorting



essence = users

TIPS

tip 1:

solve opinion wars with tests



decide based on test data,



not opinions

tip 2:

what they say is not what they do

“I know how to do it, others would not”

tell them, they were chosen for **their** qualifications, you want to see **them** using the product

“I want images in the documentation”

in fact, they need better documentation; more likely a more usable product

tip 3:

ask someone else to test your baby

you are biased - familiarity breeds content

tip 4:

look for patterns

base conclusions on behavior



observed in several users



not just one user

tip 5:

focus on **red-route** tasks



basic and critical tasks first

In Outlook: reply to an email or send email



new, fun, vanity stuff – if time and resources permit

In Outlook: set stationary or signature

tip 6:

give scenarios and goals



we do not want to give tasks to users

Use the tutorial to learn how to make a birthday-wish video...



we'd rather tell a story

Your niece has a birthday. Her mother told you she would enjoy a birthday video very much. You want to give it a try.

tip 7:

select representative participants

- ✗ no point testing:
 - IDE with students of English studies
 - online banking with yuppies and skipping house wives
 - phones for grandmas with their grandchildren

- ✓ define user groups/personas/profiles
include experienced and novices

tip 8:

start with proper introduction



do not scare them; avoid words such as "test";

"we are not testing you but the product" is scary



use a script

- tell them what will happen;
- give them a few minutes to play around;
- start with an easy first task

tip 9:

leave them on their own



don't help
(unless necessary)



watch your tongue and body language

tip 10:

learn what they think

participants often need reassurance and ask questions



if we answer directly: we don't learn much



we'd rather answer with a question

"What makes you think this is ...?"

"How do you think...?"

EXAMPLES



1: Testing a tutorial



2: Testing a product use case



3: Card sorting for new IA

example 1: Testing a tutorial

We explicitly tested a piece of documentation



ex1: Goals

1. Discover how they find info on a scenario
2. Observe users as they use a tutorial [Build a Business Application Using Node.js](#)
3. Check how experience matters for:
 - Novices - no or little experience with product
 - Builders - no scenario experience but other experience with the product
 - Extenders - masters of the scenario

ex1: Flow

1. Let them explore

We watched where and what they searched and what they tried

2. Give them the tutorial after that

ex1: Some points of interest

1. Search
2. Terminology
3. Follow the tutorial
4. Enough info
5. Skip steps
6. Navigate

ex1: Findings: search

- 7 sources of info
(no, they do not start at the documentation)
- 41 different expressions

Table 1: Search for expressions ... of participants	
Place	Search string
google	cap cloud platform database
google	app for proposals cap cloud platform proposal format
google	cap integration
google	cap cloud platform create business partner
google	cap integration software
google	cap cloud to software
google	cap cloud best practices
google	cap cloud extension
google	connect to business partner
google	cap app to connect to business partner
google	cap workflow
google	cap cloud platform products
google	cap cloud platform integration app
google	cap add-on for software (google with suggested it)
google	cap cap cloud database
google	cap cloud platform
google	cap cloud platform database storage
google	creating a web application in cap cloud platform
google	cap the account
google	cap cloud platform
help.sap.com	cap cloud platform software
help.sap.com	cloud platform connection
help.sap.com	cap business workflow
help.sap.com	cloud platform integration

Table 2: Search for expressions ... of participants	
Place	Search string
introduction.sap.com	extension factory (first time)
introduction.sap.com	connect to
introduction.sap.com	extension
google	cap cloud
google	cap cloud platform extension development
google	cloud platform extension samples

google	cap extension
google	cap cap scenarios
google	cap cloud integration with SAP/Google/NetScout
google	cap cloud business process app
google	cap cloud platform extension applications
google	cap cloud platform as extension scenario
help.sap.com	extension
help.sap.com	extension factory
help.sap.com	extension

ex1: Findings: follow tutorial

- Much harder for inexperienced users
- Difficult for confident users – often skip steps
- A number of points for improvement
- Success rate

Novices	Builders	Extenders
0.5 of 3	2.5 of 6	4 of 4

ex1: Findings: skip steps

Going through the tutorial was 'bumpy'; they skipped texts, phrases, entire sections

Interaction pattern:

- scroll up and down many times
- get to a step, scroll down to scan the whole step
- scroll back up, and start following the instructions

Reasons: formatting and use of screen real estate

ex1: Findings: *navigate*

All ended with many tabs and windows

Some did not remember or understand how they got from one page to another

All tried to use multiple tabs consciously: right-click to open in a new tabs; but it did not always work

example 2: Testing a product use case

We tested a specific scenario with the product and observed how and whether participants used the documentation



ex2: clip 1 - Find the help

The screenshot displays the SAP Cloud Platform Cockpit interface. The top navigation bar includes the SAP logo and the text "SAP Cloud Platform Cockpit". A sidebar on the left lists navigation options: Overview, Subaccounts, Resource Providers, Boosters, System Landscape, Entitlements, and Members. The main content area is titled "Global Account: example.com - Overview" and features an "Export" button. Below this, the "Global Account Info" section provides details about the account, including its ID, type, and access level. A summary row shows 10 subaccounts and 1 region. The bottom of the page shows the beginning of a "Service Usage" section.

SAP Cloud Platform Cockpit

Home [Europe (Rot)] / example.com

Global Account: example.com - Overview

[Export](#)

Global Account Info

Account ID: a84d709c-26ad-405f-a9f7-5142dc08aa6c

Account Type: DEVELOPER

Access: **Standard**

10 Subaccounts 1 Regions

Service Usage

ex2: clip 1 findings

- The contextual help
 - is easy to find
 - did not help
 - has no link to the documentation
 - has no link to dive deeper on accounts
- The user needs to open the documentation

ex2: clip 2 - Create new item

The screenshot displays the SAP Help Portal interface. At the top, the SAP logo and 'SAP Help Portal' text are on the left, while navigation icons (megaphone, question mark, user) are on the right. Below this, the main header reads 'What Is SAP Cloud Platform' with filters for 'Cloud', 'English', and 'Production'. A 'Download PDF' button is on the right. A search bar with the placeholder 'Enter keywords or a product name' and a magnifying glass icon is present, with a 'This document' dropdown on the left and an 'Advanced Search' dropdown on the right. The breadcrumb 'Home /' is visible above the article content. On the left, a 'Table of Contents' sidebar lists: 'What Is SAP Cloud Platform', 'Capabilities and Services', '> Regions', '> Environments', 'Trial Accounts', and '> Enterprise Accounts'. The main article area is titled 'Account Model' with '<Previous' and 'Next>' links. The text describes account types and mentions 'Cloud Management Tools — Feature Set Overview'. A 'Feedback' button is on the right. The footer shows 'Waiting for help.sap.com...'.

SAP SAP Help Portal

What Is SAP Cloud Platform Cloud English Production

Download PDF

This document Enter keywords or a product name

Advanced Search

Home /

<Previous

Account Model

Next>

Learn more about the different types of accounts on SAP Cloud Platform and how they relate to each other.

The SAP Cloud Platform cockpit is structured according to global accounts, subaccounts and directories.

Directories are only available if your global account is on feature set B. See [Cloud Management Tools — Feature Set Overview](#).

Related Information

Table of Contents

- What Is SAP Cloud Platform
- Capabilities and Services
- > Regions
- > Environments
- Trial Accounts
- > Enterprise Accounts

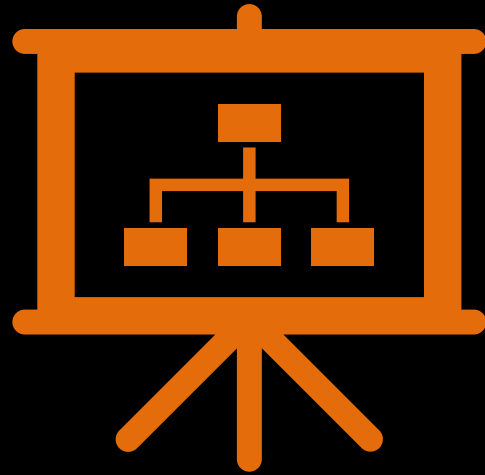
Waiting for help.sap.com...

ex2: clip 2 findings

- The concept info is OK (user scanned the topic)
- No adequate link to creating subaccounts (user scrolled up and down hunting for a link)
- Search does not return an adequate topic on creating subaccounts (user searched explicitly)
- Speed matters (user did not wait page to load)

example 3: Card sorting for new IA

We restructured the documentation based on how users order the information

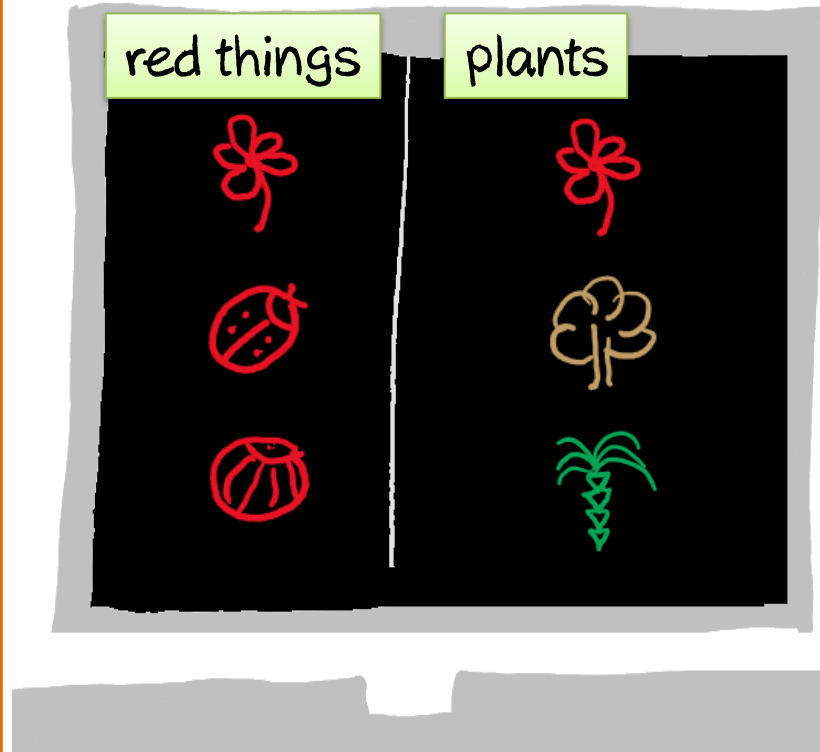


ex3: About card sorting

1. collect
objects/concepts/tasks



2. give to users to arrange in
groups and add labels



3. combine into a unified
model and build structure

- plants
 - flowers
- red things
 - flowers
- ...

ex3: Results

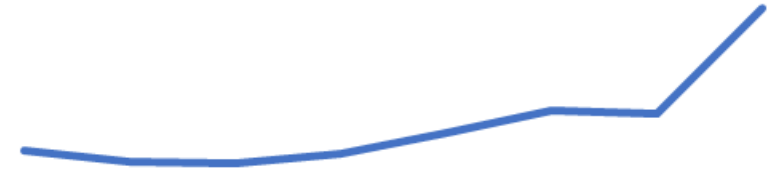
Period	Dec-13	Apr-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Dec-14	Apr-15	Jun-15	Mar-17
Visits	21 100	13 700	26 800	21 500	34 900	52 000	48 900	136 000
Users	11 400	6 700	6 400	10 000	18 600	27 100	25 800	67 300
Pages per visit	19.9	12.4	6.12	5.8	4.6	4.3	4.5	3.42
Bounce rate	2%	19%	33%	30%	39%	40%	39%	48%
Avg visit duration	05:39	06:41	06:18	06:51	05:39	05:33	05:42	04:50
Avg time on page		00:35	01:14		01:34	01:40	01:38	

ex3: Results

Visits



Users



Pages per visit



Bounce rate



Avg visit duration



Avg time on page



In summary

1. work with users to solve opinion wars
2. what users say is not what they do, so watch
3. test early and often
4. look for patterns, then draw conclusions
5. red-route tasks first
6. give scenarios and goals; not instructions
7. select representative participants
8. start with proper introduction
9. leave them on their own
10. learn what they think

YOUR TURN NOW