

1.5 The Psychology of Testing

Identifying defects during a static test such as a requirements review or user story refinement session, or identifying failures during dynamic test execution, may be perceived as criticism of the product and of its author. An element of human psychology called confirmation bias can make it difficult to accept information that disagrees with currently held beliefs. For example, since developers expect their code to be correct, they have a confirmation bias that makes it difficult to accept that the code is incorrect. In addition to confirmation bias, other cognitive biases may make it difficult for people to understand or accept information produced by testing. Further, it is a common human trait to blame the bearer of bad news, and information produced by testing often contains bad news.

As a result of these psychological factors, some people may perceive testing as a destructive activity, even though it contributes greatly to project progress and product quality (see sections 1.1 and 1.2). To try to reduce these perceptions, information about defects and failures should be communicated in a constructive way. This way, tensions between the testers and the analysts, product owners, designers, and developers can be reduced. This applies during both static and dynamic testing.

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