

Part 1:

Using a table format (which can be created using a spreadsheet or tables in a word processor), generate a list of all of the usability issues that you find, including a description of the issue, where to find the issue in the interface, the heuristic(s) violated, and the severity. There is an example of what one row of your table should look like in the section titled "Planning: Heuristic Evaluation Assignments."

Be sure that the list of issues is ranked from most severe to least severe. You should aim to have more than 10 issues identified, at least a few of which you consider to be a 2 or greater on the severity scale provided (I think you can find a few 3s at least, but there is some subjectivity here--it would be rare to find a 4 in a product that is already in use by thousands of people).

Format your table so that it would print out nicely on 8.5x11 paper (landscape mode OK). Be sure to use "word wrapping" on your spreadsheet software (if you're using it) so that all text is visible when printed or PDFed.

Description	System Location	Heuristics Violated	Severity
Reply text box is below the already submitted replies. Had to scroll down page to find it. Very confusing.	Post screen (first post)	#4 - Consistency and Standards #5 Error Prevention #10 - Help and Documentation	3
After I uploaded my photo, it still shows only my initials on my post, but my photo on my reply. Why would one show initials the the other show my photo?	Reply screen	#1 - Visibility of System Status #2 - Match Between System and Real World #4 - Consistency and Standards	3
After I replied to my own post, it still showed as "no replies." I felt unheard and confused.	Reply screen	#6 - Recognition Over Recall #9 - Error Recovery	3
No spell check on misspelled text. This is a feature that is available on other platforms, so why not here?	"Add a Post" screen	#2 - Match Between System and Real World #5 Error Prevention	2
"Error: Please enter a longer thread description." Does not provide a character minimum. Typed one letter and the post was approved. It seems like there should be a minimum of more than one character if there's going to be a minimum at all.	"Add a Post" screen	#4 - Consistency and Standards #5 Error Prevention #10 - Help and Documentation	2
No character limits given for title or text boxes. Not showing a maximum does not encourage the poster to plan accordingly. If the poster were to paste something in to the text boxes, it would be cut off.	"Add a Post" screen	#4 - Consistency and Standards #5 Error Prevention	2
Does not validate URLs when typed incorrectly. This is feature is available on other similar platforms.	"Add a Post" screen	#5 Error Prevention	1
Reply thread only has two levels. Does not allow you to reply to a reply of a reply. Want if my response was only relevant to one reply? If this was real life, I could reply to one person's response. What if there was a discussion that become so detailed it required multiple sub levels for replies?	Reply screen	#2 - Match Between System and Real World #5 Error Prevention	2
"# of Posts" is not a clickable link. Intuitively I would think text that says "posts" would link to my posts.	Profile screen	#6 - Recognition Over Recall #7 - Flexibility and Efficiency of Use	2
Command U does not underline text! However, command B and command I bold and italicize text. INCONSISTENT!	"Add a Post" screen	#4 - Consistency and Standards #5 - Error Prevention #6 - Recognition Over Recall	2
There is a delay between when I respond and when the system shows that it is working. Nothing indicates that it is "processing" my response. I felt alone in the universe.	Reply screen	#1 - Visibility of System Status #5 - Error Prevention #4 - Consistency and Standards	2
Why "upvote" and not "like"? Seems like a weird, unfamiliar word choice. And what if I wanted to downvote? Also, why can't I upvote my own post?	Reply screen	#2 - Match Between System and Real World	1
Adding a rectangular profile image made it stretched and wouldn't let me crop into a corner (only zoom into the middle). Image shape is circular on screen but it crops as a square.	Profile screen	#3 - User Control and Freedom #4 - Consistency and Standards #7 - Flexibility and Efficiency of Use	1
When the "code" icon is grayed out it's difficult to decipher what it is. The gray on gray tone on tone doesn't have enough contrast when the link isn't clickable.	"Add a Post" screen	#2 - Match Between System and Real World #6 - Recognition Over Recall #8 - Aesthetic and Minimalist Design	1

Part 2:

Once you have generated your prioritized list of violations, you should write your report. Write a streamlined report, consisting only of the top 5-10 issues found. It is likely that you found more than 10 violations, so you will have to choose the most important ones to share. The report should consist of a listing of the usability problems found, following the format of the Findings section of the example report below. Don't worry about the other sections of the Example--for this assignment we'll just focus on the Findings.

Assume that the audience for your report is the team responsible for making improvements to the Coursera site and your job is to communicate to them the biggest usability problems you found, along with the location in the UI, heuristic(s) violated, and severity. You should also elaborate the description of the issue, include screen shots, and offer suggestions for improvement. Elaborated descriptions, screen shots, and suggestions were not part of Assignment 1, so it will be extra work to generate these).

The "elaborated description" should include enough detail that someone else could identify exactly what elements and interactions you are talking about, a brief description of the heuristic(s) violated (remember that your "clients" may not be familiar with Nielsen's heuristics: not everyone has taken this course!), and why the problem you identified violates the heuristic(s). About a paragraph for each issue is sufficient. If you wish to quote Nielsen's explanations of the heuristics, be sure to quote him (don't make it seem like they are your own words) and provide a pointer to Nielsen's page describing the heuristics (<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>).

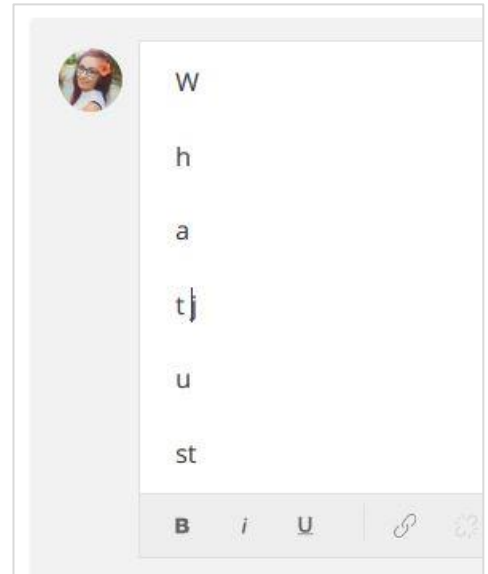
The "screen shot" should be cropped as much as possible to highlight only the part of the interface where the issue occurs. If you feel it is important to include a wider shot of the UI for context, be sure to highlight the portion where the issue occurs. In some cases, it may be necessary to include multiple screenshots to illustrate a problem (e.g., "before" and "after" shots).

For "suggestions for improvement," you will need to be creative! A good general strategy is to find another product that you believe offers a better solution for the problem. If no such examples occur to you, you can describe a possible solution either through writing or, if you are ambitious, by sketching a possible solution either digitally (using graphics software) or on paper (and including in your report as a scan or high-quality photo).

Findings and Recommendations

Below is a list of the first five (out of ten total) identified violations of the Coursera discussion forums.

Finding 1. The forum editor jumps out of function after multiple attempts to input different formatting. This triggers when backspace is used one too many times to get to the beginning of the text area, to then input new content. The system location of this function can be found in “Create a new thread”, “Add a Reply”. **Violations:** (#3) *User control and freedom* – no option for undo or redo. The text area is simply stuck, and user has no control. (#5) *Error prevention* – no option available to prevent the formatting from jumping off and display a character per line from happening, and (#9) *Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors* – no option available to reset the formatting and by doing so also educate the user that the error can be resolved quickly.



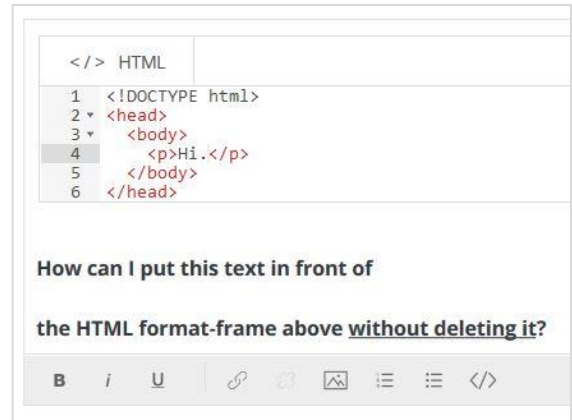
Recommendation: Implement “clear formatting/reset to plain text” as an option in the toolbar below, next to “B”, “I” etc.

Finding 2. The use of backspace button outside the forum editor operates with no sensitivity to the potential input. This leads to lost information because there is no popup or warning “Your information will be lost if you wish to continue with backspace from here,” or anything similar giving the user the opportunity to save the input before losing it. The system location of this function can be found in “Create a new thread”, “Add a Reply”. **Violations:** (#5) *Error prevention* – no option available to prevent the action of the backspace from fulfilling once hit (accidentally or not), and (#9) *Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors* – no option available to stop the action of the backspace before it fulfills; and get back what was lost.

Recommendation: Display popup or warning to the user once the backspace has been activated and give the user the opportunity to stay on the page (and save the input) or leave the page (and be aware the input will be lost).

Finding 3. The option for “Code” (</>) in the toolbar is a separate formatting setting. If selected as the first input, it will fixate itself at the very top of the editor; which makes it incredibly hard to move around more freely afterwards. The system location of this function can be found in “Create a new thread”, “Add a Reply”.

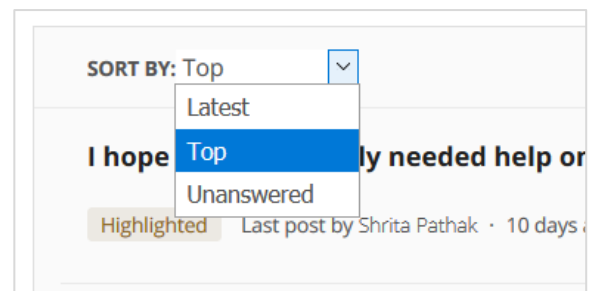
Violations: (#3) *User control and freedom* – no option for undo or redo. The top part of the text area is stuck, and user has no control. (#6) *Recognition rather than recall* – no signs, options or instructions visible on how to properly use the different formatting, (#7) *Flexibility and efficiency of use* – most formatting related issues are recognizable by more experienced users [accelerators]; unseen by other less-experienced users, and (#9) *Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors* – no option available to re-position this formatting unless the input is removed and re-entered from scratch. It is not quite user-friendly to start a post/thread with a portion of “Code” (</>).



Recommendation: Implement an automatic margin to the stylesheet of all the options under “Code” (</>) in particular; make it easier for users to input content (plain text) above or below the formatting at any time without risking to lose the information or rewriting it from scratch.

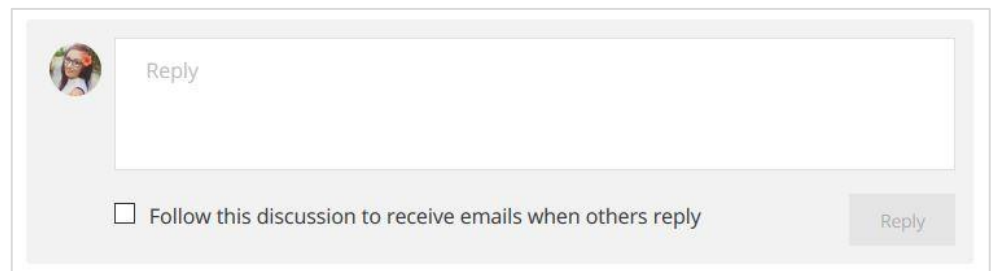
Finding 4. The “Sort By” dropdown menu contains three options: “Latest”, “Top”, and “Unanswered”. The middle option, “Top” is totally unclear and seem to not quite fit in. The system location of this function can be found in “Threads”/List of threads in “Forum”.

Violations: (#6) *Recognition rather than recall* – the option reloads back to default value (“Latest”) automatically once the user leaves the list page, and later comes back. This impacts the sixth violation because the system expects the user to remember that they chose a different value earlier; for example “Top”, and (#8) *Aesthetic and minimalist design* – no relevancy to the unknown meaning of “Top”; as the violation reads, ‘Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility’ (Jakob Nielsen)



Recommendation: Replace the name of the Top option to something clearer; or remove it altogether. This forum overall is most relevant to latest activity (as new students and their new posts, threads roll in continuously).

Finding 5. The inside links structure primarily depends on where on the page the user is located/focused on; and determines how the user gets redirected to the “Reply” text area. If the “Reply” text area is not visible from where on the page the user is focused on, the user will be visually moved to the text area. But if the text area is visible from where on the page the user is focused on, not much will happen visually. The system location of this function can be found in “Thread”. **Violations:** (#1) *Visibility of system status* – the inside links do not always keep the user informed about what is going on by clicking “Reply”. Because there is no clear feedback on when the “Reply” text area is activated (no color, or border etc.); this violates the first rule of Nielsen’s heuristics, and (#7) *Flexibility and efficiency of use* – users that are more experienced would recognize this interaction as inside links while less-experienced users might not get anywhere, and would not think to scroll all the way down.



Recommendation: Restyle the “Reply” text area to be closed by default and opened when the user focuses on it by confirming (clicking or mouseover) it has been reached and seen appropriately.