



## Usability Testing

Usability testing refers to evaluating a product or service by testing it with representative users. Typically, during a test, participants will try to complete typical tasks while observers watch, listen and takes notes. The goal is to identify any usability problems, collect qualitative and quantitative data and determine the participant's satisfaction with the product.

To [run an effective usability test](#), you need to develop a solid [test plan](#), [recruit participants](#) , and then [analyze and report your findings](#).

### Benefits of Usability Testing

Usability testing lets the design and development teams identify problems before they are coded. The earlier issues are identified and fixed, the less expensive the fixes will be in terms of both staff time and possible impact to the schedule. During a usability test, you will:

- Learn if participants are able to complete specified tasks successfully and
- Identify how long it takes to complete specified tasks
- Find out how satisfied participants are with your Web site or other product
- Identify changes required to improve user performance and satisfaction
- And analyze the performance to see if it meets your usability objectives

### You Do Not Need a Formal Lab

Effective Usability Testing does not require a formal usability lab for testing. You can do effective usability testing in any of these settings:

- Fixed laboratory having two or three connected rooms outfitted with audio-visual equipment
- Room with portable recording equipment
- Room with no recording equipment, as long as someone is observing the user and taking notes
- Remotely, with the user in a different location (either moderated or unmoderated)

### Factors Affecting Cost

Your testing costs depend on

- Type of testing performed
- Size of the team assembled for testing
- Number of participants for testing
- Number of days you will be testing

Remember to budget for more than one usability test. Building usability into a Web site (or any product) is an iterative process. Consider these elements when budgeting for usability testing:

- **Time:** You will need time to plan the usability test. It will take the usability specialist and the team time to become familiar with the site and pilot test the test scenarios. Be sure to budget in time for this test prep as well as running tests, analyzing the data, writing the report, and presenting the findings.
- **Recruiting Costs:** Consider how or where you will recruit your participants. You will either need to allow for staff time to recruit or engage a recruiting firm to schedule participants for you based on the requirements.
- **Participant Compensation:** If you will be compensating participants for their time or travel, factor that into your testing budget.
- **Rental Costs:** If you do not have monitoring or recording equipment, you will need to budget for rental costs for the lab or other equipment. You may also need to secure a location for testing, a conference room for example, so consider this as well.

It's important to keep in mind that usability testing is not just a milestone to be checked off on the project schedule. The team should have a goal for why they are testing and then implement the results.

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