

# HCI Evaluation

## Part One

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# Today's Lecture

- What is HCI evaluation?
- Why is it important
- The Think Aloud evaluation technique
- Heuristic evaluation



# HCI Evaluation

- Evaluation is a crucial part of the user-centred development process – we want to ensure our software meets our users' requirements
- The focus of this lecture is on Think Aloud technique and Heuristic Evaluation, which are two of the most widely used evaluation methods in industry
- They are methods that we recommend you carry out on your game as part of your group project – you can write up the results in your report



# Why is evaluation important?

- “Iterative design, with its repeating cycle of design and testing, is the only validated methodology in existence that will consistently produce successful results. If you don’t have user-testing as an integral part of your design process you are going to throw buckets of money down the drain.”

Bruce Tognazzini (we'll meet him later in the lecture)



# The Think Aloud evaluation technique

- Users are asked to verbalise what they are thinking and doing as they perform a task using your software
- The Think Aloud technique provides insights into the user experience of using your software
- It can identify issues with the software e.g. navigation problems or content that can be improved
- It can be used as part of the software development process to iteratively improve software or used with a finished product



# Benefits of Think Aloud

- Cheap
- Relatively easy
- It provides insight into people's experiences as they interact with your product
- It can be carried out with low numbers of participants
- Fits in with most software development processes



# Drawbacks of Think Aloud

- it relies on people verbalising thoughts and impressions, rather than objective measures
- Participants may say what they believe to be the right answer rather than what they really think (social desirability). This can distort your results and conclusions



# Planning a Think Aloud evaluation

- Decide what questions you want your study to answer. For example, whether users can find particular content or what their understanding is of the information presented.
- Write down the tasks you want the user to complete while using your software
- Decide how many participants you want to recruit and how long you want the sessions to last (45 to 90 minutes works well)



# Carrying out a Think Aloud evaluation 1

- Have a **facilitator** to run the evaluation and one or two observers to take notes on what the user says
- Explain to the participants how a think aloud works: they should tell you their thoughts, reactions and emotions as they occur while they are performing the task
- Explain that there is no right answer and it's fine to be critical



# Carrying out a Think Aloud evaluation 2

- Ask the participants to complete the tasks you have planned. This should be **uninterrupted** as far as possible, although the facilitator will probably need to give some prompts.
- If the user goes silent then prompt them to verbalise their thoughts by saying “what are you thinking”



# Analysing a Think Aloud evaluation

- Put the written notes together from both observers in to one document
- Organise the notes into meaningful categories e.g. what features helped users; what features led to problems; any additional features that users wanted.
- You can make your own meaningful categories
- Count the number of times users comment about different categories to identify the biggest issues



# Jakob Nielsen – heuristic evaluation



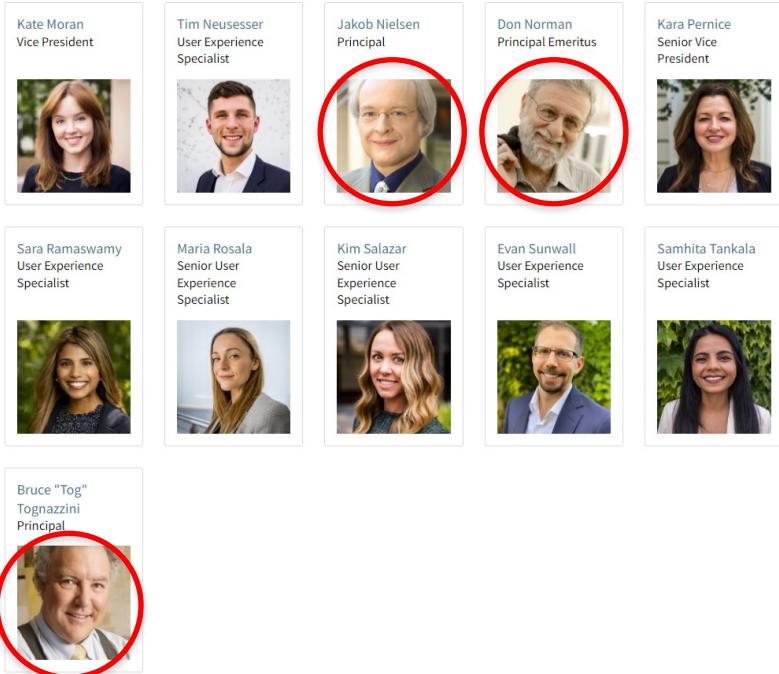
Nielsen, J., and Molich, R. (1990).  
Heuristic evaluation of user interfaces,  
*CHI'90*, 249-256.

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-to-conduct-a-heuristic-evaluation/>

# Nielsen Norman group

<http://www.nngroup.com/>

- The Nielsen Norman group is a UX research and consulting firm
- It was founded by two big figures in the HCI world:
  - Don Norman coined the term “user experience” and developed a set of design heuristics
  - Jakob Nielsen also developed a set of usability heuristics and was a pioneer of heuristic evaluation



# What is a heuristic?

- A rule of thumb
- Experienced-based strategies
- E.g. if you're doing some DIY then 'measure twice, cut once' is a useful heuristic



# Heuristic evaluation 1

- An evaluation technique conducted **without** users
- Also known as **expert** evaluation as it's sometimes carried out by external experts (sometimes by the development team) aka evaluators
- It's a type of **analytical** evaluation, that is, based on a set of principles or a model...
- ...rather than by observing users (which is known as **empirical** evaluation)



# Heuristic evaluation 2

- It's an **inspection** method – it involves inspecting a design to find usability problems
- This involves asking whether the design complies with **usability principles** (a set of heuristics)



# Heuristic evaluation is widely used because...

- It's **cheap** (only needs a small number of evaluators and no specialist equipment or labs)
- Relatively **easy** to carry out (can do it after a few hours of training)
- **Instant gratification** – lists of problems are **available immediately** after the inspection
- It **fits in** with most software development processes used in industry
- It's a very **cost effective**: benefit-cost ratio of 48: cost of \$10,500; expected benefits \$500,000 (Nielsen 1994).



# Where are the users?

- Heuristic evaluation is based on HCI researchers' extensive experience of designing and evaluating interfaces
- By focusing on users, HCI researchers learned what works and what doesn't
- Their experience is distilled into **usability principles** (a set of heuristics)
- The principles represent the findings from thousands of user studies
- They have been used for over 30 years



# What are Nielsen's 10 principles of heuristic evaluation?

- visibility of system status
- match between system and real world
- user control and freedom
- consistency and standards
- error prevention
- recognition rather than recall
- flexibility and efficiency of use
- aesthetic and minimalist design
- help users recognise, diagnose and recover from errors
- help and documentation

# Nielsen's 10 principles of heuristic evaluation (minimal information)

- feedback
- metaphor
- user control and freedom
- consistency
- error prevention
- recognition not recall
- flexible use
- minimal information
- error recognition and recovery
- help

# Visibility of system status - feedback

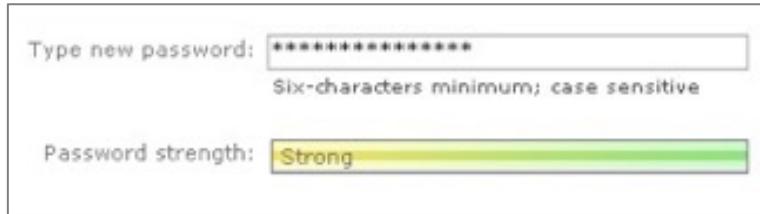
- Inform the user about what's going on:
  - show appropriate feedback and progress
  - do not show blank screens
  - do not show static “load” or progress messages



# Visibility of system status: examples

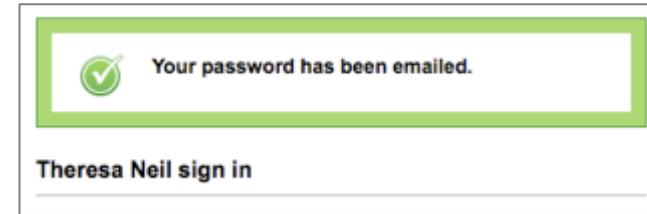
Type new password:  Six-characters minimum; case sensitive

Password strength: Strong



## Microsoft Live

Password strength is shown as the password is entered. Colors are used to augment the message.

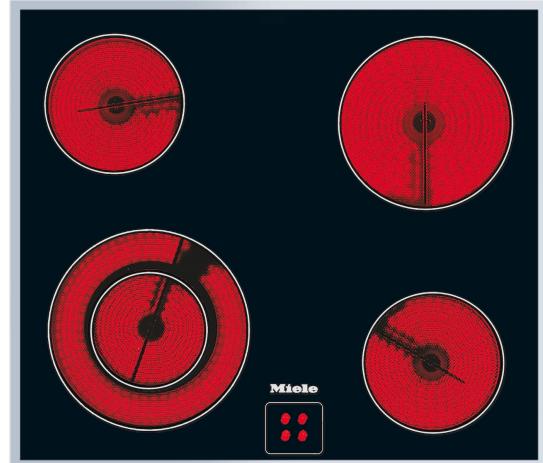


## Tick

A feedback message is displayed when an action is performed

# Match between system and real world - metaphor

- There must be a match between the system's interface controls and the real world
- The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms
- Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order



# Match between system and real world - examples



## iTunes

Organized as a library that contains your media library: music, movies, TV shows, audiobooks. Beneath the Library is the Store where you can buy more media to put in your Library.

# User control and freedom - navigation

- Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked “emergency exit” to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialog.
- Support undo and redo and a clear way to navigate.
- Provide bread crumbs to clearly show where the user is.

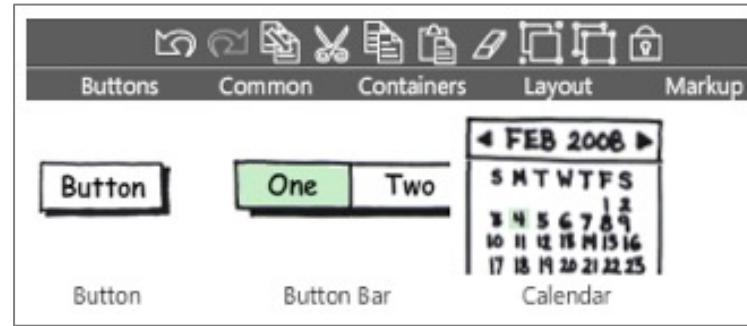


# User control and freedom - examples

The screenshot shows the Wufoo Form Gallery interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with links for Home, Gallery, Templates, Search, Forms, Surveys, Invitations, Registrations, Lead Generation, and Online Orders. Under the 'Surveys' section, there's a 'Survey TEMPLATES' heading with six numbered options: 1. Customer Satisfaction Survey, 2. Cancellation Survey, 3. Business Demographic Survey, 4. Web Site Visitor Survey, 5. Tech Support Satisfaction Survey, and 6. Health Survey. At the top right, there are 'Download HTML' and 'Add to Wufoo' buttons. Below the sidebar, the main content area has a 'Wufoo' logo and the title 'Customer Satisfaction Survey'. It asks users to take a few moments to complete the satisfaction survey. A question follows: 'How long have you used our product / service?' with five radio button options: 'Less than a month', '1-6 months', '1-3 years', and 'Over 3 Years'. There's also a link to 'Tech Support Satisfaction Survey'.

## Wufoo

Clearly marks where the person is and where they can go by showing the selection in each menu



## Balsamiq

Undo and Redo buttons are available in the toolbar, and can also be accessed with the standard keyboard shortcuts

# Consistency and standards

- Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.
- Follow platform conventions.



# Consistency: examples



## Gmail

When Gmail was designed, they based the organizational folders on the same ones used in other client email applications: Inbox, Drafts, Sent Mail.



## Microsoft Office

Word, Excel, and PowerPoint all use the same style toolbar with the same primary menu options: Home, Insert, Page Layout.

# Error prevention

- Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place.
- Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

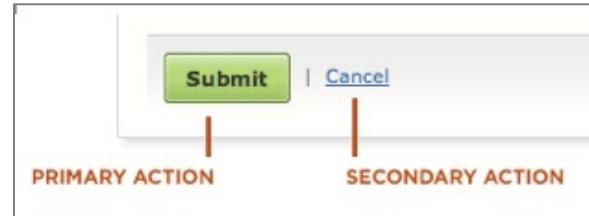


# Error prevention: examples



## Yammer

Disables the update button after it is clicked, so the person cannot update the post twice by accident



## Example from “Web form Design:Filling in the Blanks” by Luke W.

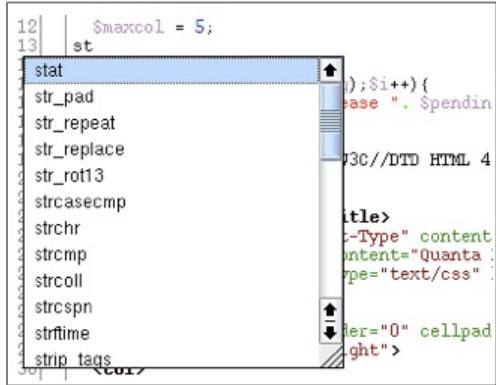
Make the primary action prominent with a larger click area. Cancel and other secondary actions are just shown as links

# Recognition rather than recall

- Minimize the user's memory load.
- Make objects, actions, and options visible.
- The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another.
- Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.



# Recognition: examples



## Quanta IDE

Auto completion for coding in a development environment



## Keynote

Previews the fonts you can pick from, instead of just the font name

# Flexibility and efficiency of use

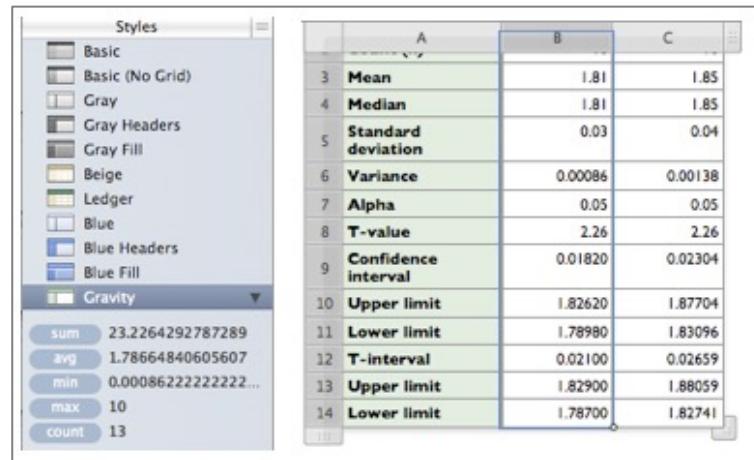
- **Accelerators** — unseen by the novice user — may often speed up the interaction for the expert user so that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions

Edit	
<u>Undo</u>	Ctrl+Z
<u>Redo</u>	Ctrl+Y
<u>Cut</u>	Ctrl+X
<u>Copy</u>	Ctrl+C
<u>Paste</u>	Ctrl+V
<u>Select All</u>	Ctrl+A

# Flexibility and efficiency: examples

Common Shortcuts	
Add Action	Return
New Window	⌘N
Synchronize with Server	⌃⌘S
Clean Up	⌘K
Planning Mode	⌘1
Context Mode	⌘2
Inbox	⌃⌘1
Quick Entry	⌃⌃Space
Quick Entry's shortcut can be customized in Preferences	

**OmniFocus**  
List of keyboard  
shortcuts and  
accelerators



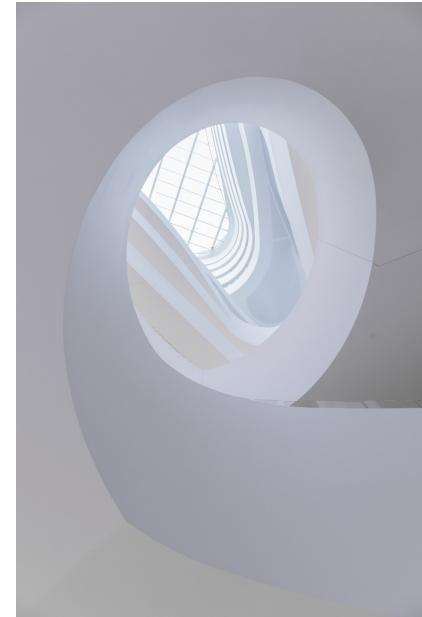
The screenshot shows a Numbers spreadsheet application. On the left, a sidebar titled 'Styles' lists various table formats like Basic, Gray, and Gravity. Below the sidebar, a table displays statistical data for three columns (A, B, C). The table rows are numbered 3 to 14. The data includes:

	A	B	C
3	Mean	1.81	1.85
4	Median	1.81	1.85
5	Standard deviation	0.03	0.04
6	Variance	0.00086	0.00138
7	Alpha	0.05	0.05
8	T-value	2.26	2.26
9	Confidence interval	0.01820	0.02304
10	Upper limit	1.82620	1.87704
11	Lower limit	1.78980	1.83096
12	T-interval	0.02100	0.02659
13	Upper limit	1.82900	1.88059
14	Lower limit	1.78700	1.82741

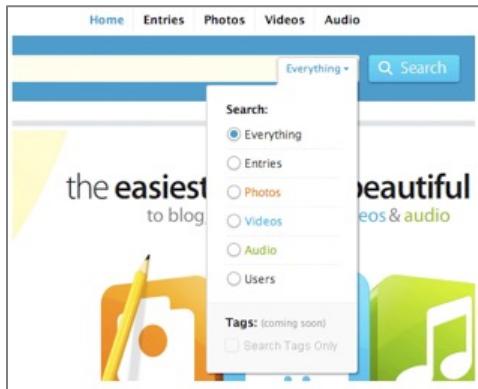
**Numbers by Apple**  
Previews common function results on  
the left when a column is selected, more  
efficient than clicking on an action in the  
toolbar

# Aesthetic and minimalist design

- 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
- Visual layout should respect the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.



# Aesthetics: example

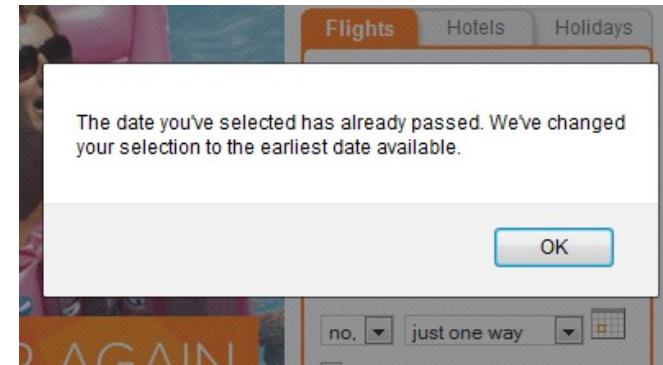


**Kontain's** search menu exemplifies the four principles of visual design:

1. Contrast: bold text is used for the two labels in the search
2. Repetition: the orange, blue, and green text match the media types
3. Alignment : strong left alignment of text, right aligned drop down
4. Proximity: a light rule is used to separate tags from the other options

# Help users recognise, diagnose and recover from errors

- Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors.
- Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no jargon), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.



# Error recognition and recovery: examples

Or start a new account

Choose a username (no spaces)  
 ⚠ bert is already taken. Please choose a different username.

Choose a password  
 ⚠ Passwords must be at least 6 characters and can only contain letters and numbers.

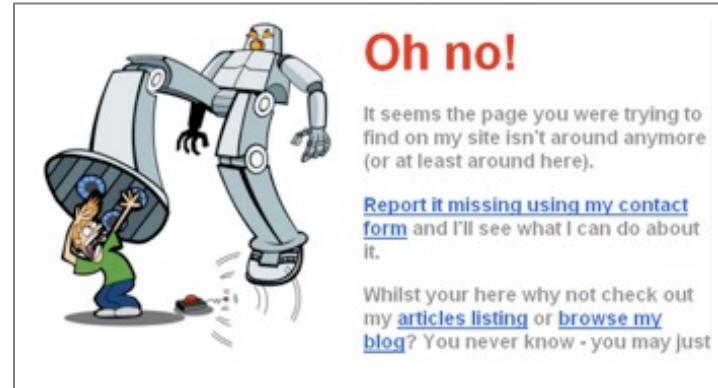
Retype password

Email address (must be real!)  
 ⚠ The email provided does not appear to be valid

Send me occasional Digg updates.

**Digg**

Provides immediate feedback with specific instructions



**Humorous ‘Page Not Found’ Error**  
Uses a funny image and text, but provides viable alternatives (article listings and blog link) and a course of action (report it)

# Help and documentation

- Even though it is better if software can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation.
- Any such information should be contextual, easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

A screenshot of a web form for a travel purchase. The form includes fields for Card type, Expiration date, Cardholder name, and First name. A tooltip is displayed over the 'Card type' dropdown menu, which lists 'MasterCard' as the selected option. The tooltip text reads: 'Only the forms of payment in the list are accepted for this travel purchase. Some forms of payment may not be available for all transactions.' There is also a link to 'Close window' at the bottom right of the tooltip.

Card type: \* MasterCard  
Expiration date: \* Month Year  
Cardholder name (as)  
First name:

**i Don't see your card type?**  
Only the forms of payment in the list are accepted for this travel purchase. Some forms of payment may not be available for all transactions.  
Close window

# Help and documentation: examples



## Picnik

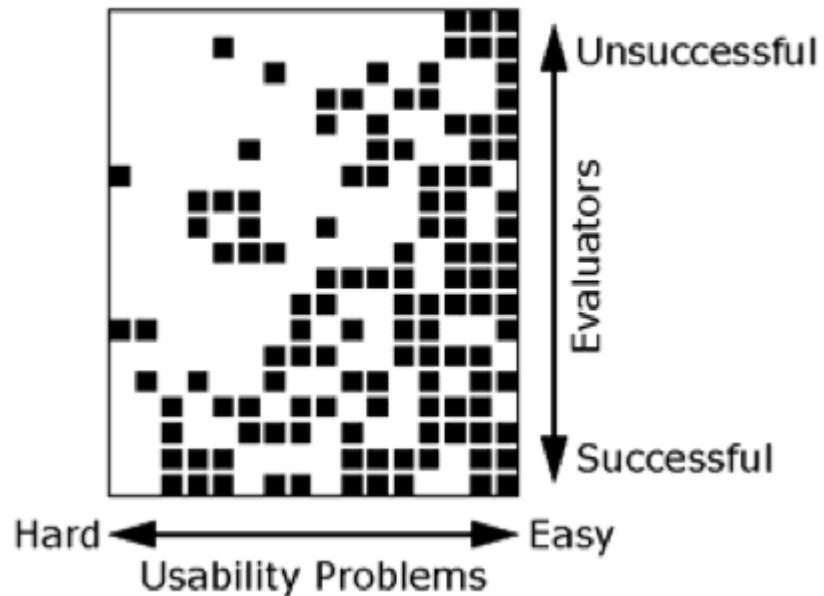
Contextual tips in Picnik are clear and easy to navigate

A screenshot of the GoodBarry software interface. It shows a dashboard with various metrics and graphs. Overlaid on the dashboard is a video player with a large play button and the text 'watch the video'. To the left of the video player, there is a block of text: 'Hi I'm Barry. I'm helping 1000s of business owners save time and grow their online business. How? They're using GoodBarry - my integrated system that runs their website, email marketing and online shop while automatically growing their customer database. My customers have one central console with everything they need to run their business. At only \$18/month for the entire package and no contracts, shouldn't you join them?' There is also a small circular icon with a play button inside it.

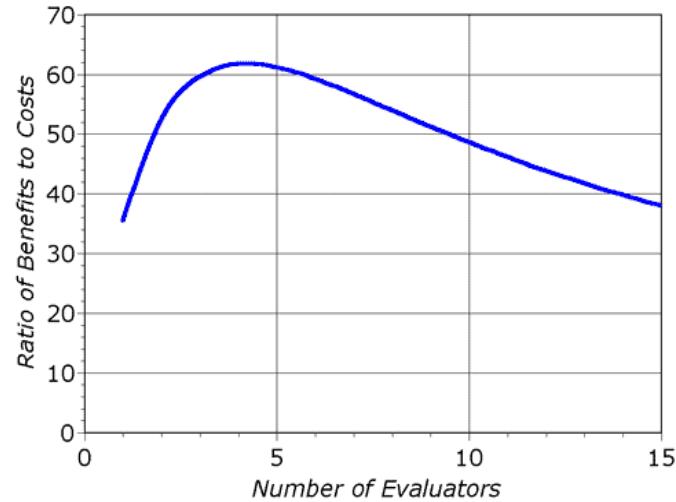
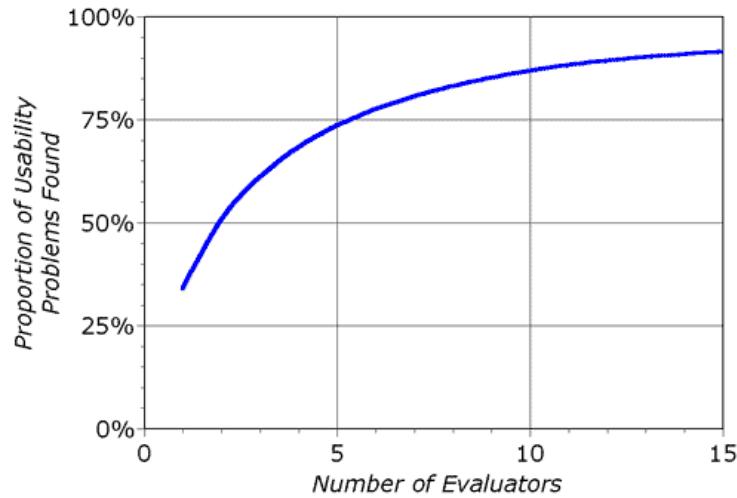
## GoodBarry

Embedded videos can be used to showcase features as well as get people started using the product

# How many evaluators are needed for heuristic evaluation?



# Practical considerations



# How to run a heuristic evaluation 1

- Each of the 3 – 5 evaluators does a heuristic evaluation of an interface alone
- Sometimes a facilitator can record the evaluator's comments, sometimes the evaluator does it
- A facilitator **can** answer evaluators' questions, in contrast to traditional user testing, particularly if it's not a walk up and use system
- Heuristic evaluation can be done on paper prototypes



# How to run a heuristic evaluation 2

- Heuristic evaluations typically last 1 – 2 hours, but it does depend on the complexity of the software
- The expert goes through the interface several times – first time to get a feel for the system, second time to focus on specific elements
- Evaluators can be given scenarios that describe typical usage scenarios (built from a task analysis of users)
- Evaluators produce a list of usability problems: the usability principle and the design feature that violated it



# Benefits of heuristic evaluation

- Cheap
- Relatively easy
- Instant gratification lists of problems are available immediately after the inspection
- It can be carried out with low numbers of participants
- Fits in with most software development processes
- Cost effective



# Drawbacks of heuristic evaluation

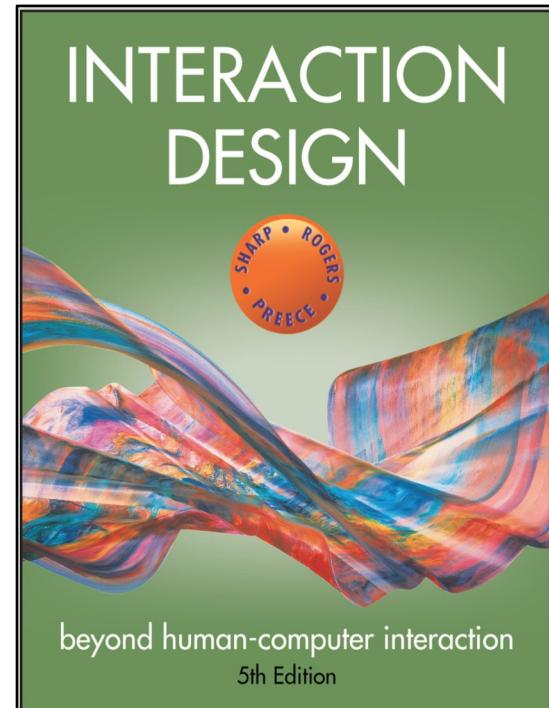
- Important issues may get missed
- Might identify false issues
- Many trivial issues are often identified, making it seem overly critical
- Experts have biases



# Reading

- *Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction* covers all HCI evaluation techniques. It's available through the university library as an eBook. Read about the evaluation techniques covered in this lecture to deepen your understanding
- Read the original Nielsen paper on heuristic evaluation:

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-to-conduct-a-heuristic-evaluation/>



# Reading 2

- Explore the materials (papers, articles and videos) on heuristic evaluation on the Nielsen Norman group website:

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>



# Before the workshop today

- Please review the lecture materials on the Think Aloud and Heuristic Evaluation techniques
- Your workshop activities will involve evaluating your games using these two techniques

