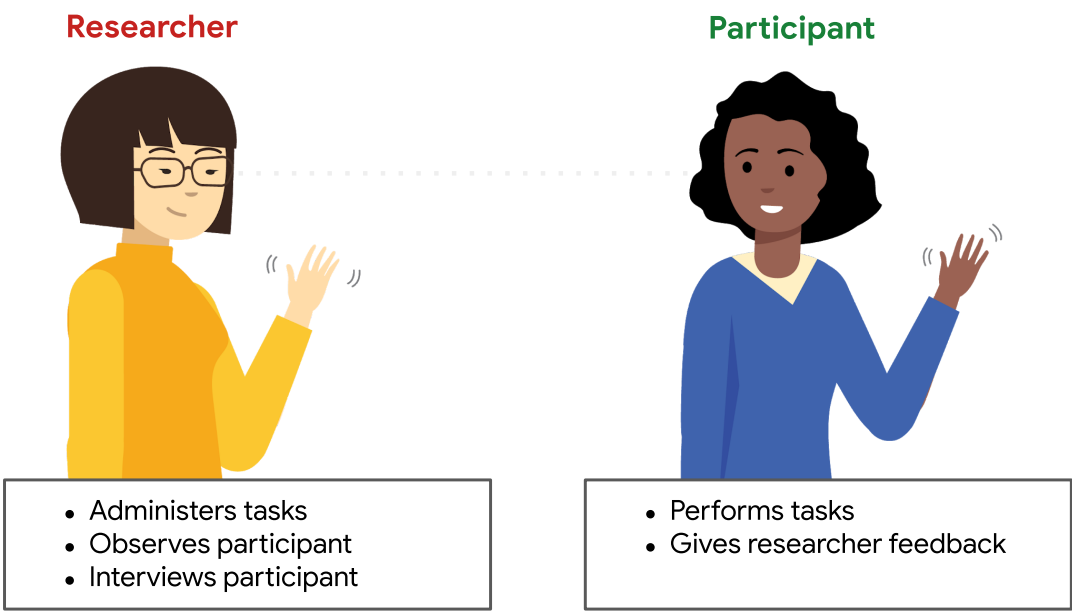# Optional - Learn more about usability studies

As a UX designer, your job is to learn as much as you can about the users you're designing for, in order to create a helpful product that meets the users' real needs. One way to gather feedback about your work directly from your target users is by conducting a usability study. As a reminder, a **usability study** is a research method that assesses how easy it is for participants to complete core tasks in a design. You might also hear this research method referred to as usability testing; both are accepted terminology.

Usability studies can help your team understand how real users interact with your designs and how well your product meets their needs. Because usability studies can be relatively inexpensive, they're a "low risk, high reward" way to test designs!

There are two types of usability studies that you can conduct: moderated and unmoderated.
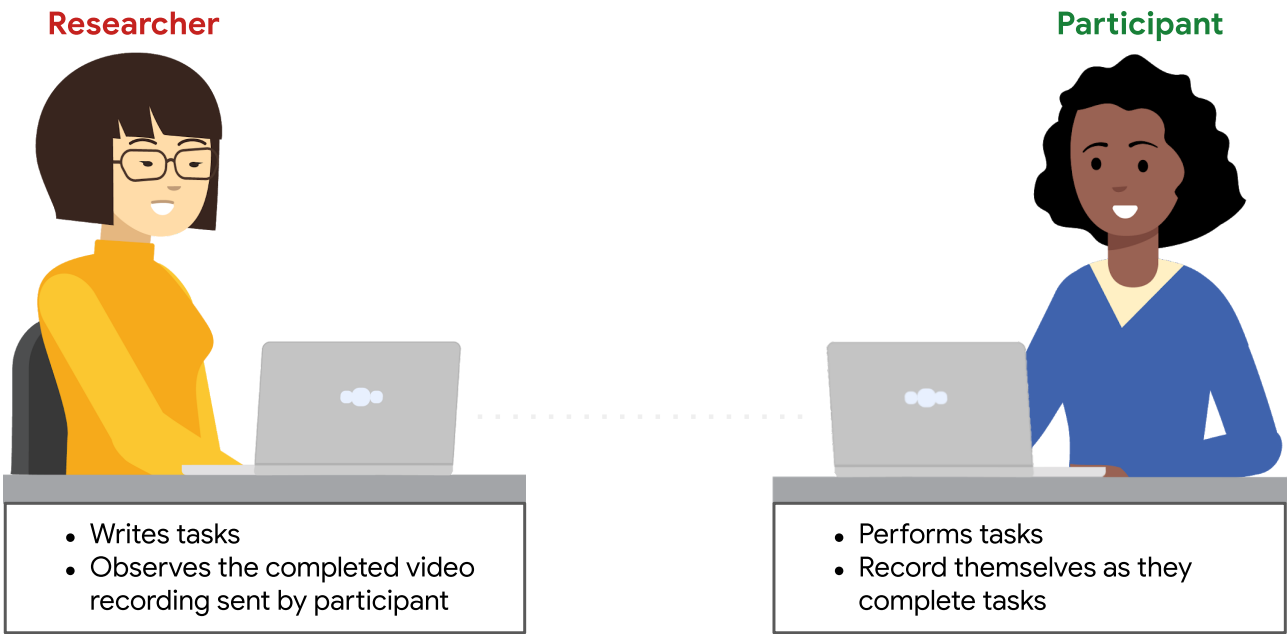
Moderated usability studies have a person, known as a moderator, guide participants through the study in real time. Because a person facilitates the session, moderated usability studies allow for rapport building between the moderator and participant, which can help the participant open up and share more feedback about the design. Moderated studies work best when you want to dig into the details because you can ask follow-up questions throughout the session to learn more.

Moderated usability study

Researcher
- Administers tasks
- Observes participant
- Interviews participant

Participant
- Performs tasks
- Gives researcher feedback

Unmoderated usability studies have participants test the prototypes without human guidance. Participants move through the study at their own pace and often in their own environment. Usually, the study is recorded on video, and the UX team reviews the video footage after the study. Unmoderated studies can be advantageous because they more closely simulate how a user would interact with the product in the real world.

Unmoderated usability study

Researcher
- Writes tasks
- Observes the completed video recording sent by participant

Participant
- Performs tasks
- Record themselves as they complete tasks

Whether you conduct a moderated or an unmoderated usability study, a few things will remain the same:

- **Tasks** in a usability study are actions a real user might perform in your product, like entering an address, placing an order, or making a reservation. The tasks that you ask participants to complete during the usability study should be the same tasks that an actual user would need to complete to successfully move through your product in the real world.

- **The script** should be repeated with each participant, in the same order, to replicate the same study environment. Consistency is key here.

- **Participants** should be representative of the product's target users and should align with the personas you created earlier in the design process. In other words, participants in the research study should have the traits you've already matched with users of your product.

Usability studies can and should be conducted at every stage of the UX design process. Of course, the number of studies you conduct depends on your project's timeline, goals, and budget. But usability studies can happen when you have a low fidelity prototype, a high fidelity prototype, or even a finished product.

If you want to learn even more about the value of usability studies, check out this article on Hubspot ↗ about the value usability studies provide in practice or this article from Nielsen Norman Group ↗ about the basics of usability testing.

Mark as completed

⚪ Like   👎 Dislike   ⚐ Report an issue