1.

Activity introduction

This activity will help you learn how to conduct your own usability study for a UX design project. A usability study is a research method that evaluates how easy it is for participants to complete tasks in a design. An effective usability study provides actionable feedback about your design, which helps you decide what to do next. In this activity, you'll be conducting a usability study for your portfolio project using the research plan you've already created as well as the prototype that you've been working on.

After completing this activity, you'll have the opportunity to compare your work to a completed exemplar in the following course item.

Step-by-step instructions

At this point, you should have a completed UX research plan and working prototype for your portfolio project. You'll use these resources to conduct your usability study, so you'll need to go back and complete the previous self-reviews if you haven't already!

Step 1: Open your note-taking spreadsheet template

To use the template for this course item, click the link below and select "Use Template."

Link to template: note-taking spreadsheet template↗

OR

If you don't have a Google account, you can download the template directly from the attachment below.

🔗 Google UX Design Certificate - Usability study note-taking spreadsheet template (1)
XLSX File

Set up your spreadsheet by making sure you have the same number of tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet as you do participants in the study. Then, add each participant's name to the blue cell in Row 1, Column A on each tab of the spreadsheet.

During the interview, the things you should assess include:

Tasks participants complete. Record this in Column A.

The click path, or sequence of actions, a participant follows for each task. Record this in Column B.

Observations about participant behaviors, feelings, and pain points as they interact with the product. Record this in Column C.

Direct quotes from participants that highlight parts of their experience. Record this in Column D.

How easy or difficult you thought it was for the participant to complete each task. Record this in Column E.

Lastly, the template leaves open several extra rows where you can add any noteworthy additional observations made during the study.

You'll be taking notes throughout your interviews, so it's important to have a system for documentation. During the interviews, take as many notes as you can, paying close attention to behaviors, opinions, and attitudes expressed by participants. Observe where participants get stuck or frustrated, and where they excel.

Step 2: Begin your interviews

Making your participants feel comfortable before an interview may seem casual, but it's extremely important. The more safe and empowered participants feel, the more likely they are to share honest answers that will provide the best data.

Here are a few best practices for beginning an interview:

Ask the participant how they're doing

Let the participant know what you'd like them to do in specific detail: Encourage them to think out loud (If they get quiet during a task, gently encourage them, because it's important to know what the participant is thinking as they go through the different tasks)
Remind the participant that they aren't being tested and that there are no right or wrong answers

Ask for the participant's consent to record the interview

Let the participants know they can ask the researcher to rephrase the question if it's unclear or confusing

Thank the participant for their time

Let the participant know that constructive criticism is welcome

Assure the participant that if they can't complete a task it's not their fault

Keep this list in mind as you go into your interviews. The more safe and secure your participants feel, the more likely they are to open up!

Step 3: Instruct participants to complete each task

The script that you created for your portfolio project research plan will be your guide to this stage of your usability study. After welcoming each participant and letting them settle in, present them with the tasks and questions in your script. Remember to take notes throughout the interview, following the instructions in Step 1.

As a usability study moderator, be sure to:

Ask questions that are open-ended and encourage elaboration

Ask follow-up questions whenever possible

Summarize the participant's answers for confirmation

Phrase everything neutrally so it doesn't sound like you're making assumptions

Phrase questions identically for each participant to avoid skewed data

Avoid helping participants with tasks and explaining how parts of the design work

Take detailed notes on each participant's behaviors, questions, and feedback

Your goal during these interviews is to learn as much as possible about what users feel and experience while interacting with your design. The deeper you're able to dig, the more information you'll have to improve your design. Encourage your participants to elaborate as much as possible in order to understand the motivations behind their actions and feelings.

Once you've finished your interviews, ask yourself if you've satisfied the following criteria:

. Did you interview five distinct people?

. Did you take notes in the note-taking template?

. Did you carefully record participant feelings, behaviors, quotes, and feedback?

If you didn't answer 'yes' to any of the questions, go back and make sure to address anything you missed.