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CSCI 3002

Evaluations without Test Users

Cognitive Walkthrough:

The exercise begins with the user accessing the evaluation at scratch.mit.edu. The initial objective is to make the cat turn upside down. After logging into/creating an account, the user is presented with a green “try it out” button, which is intuitive enough to understand as being the start of the exercise. On the right side of the page, the user is presented with a series of “action” buttons, which can be used to change the operating landscape in some way. In particular, the second command turns the cat right by 15 degrees. At this point, the user can either edit the 15 degrees, or repeatedly use the action to rotate a full 180 degrees. The actions have two font colors; one for static parts, and the other for dynamic parts.

Heuristics:

Simple and natural dialogue: The interface is intuitive, with easy to access buttons, and differentiated colors for ease-of-use.

Speak the user’s language: The language used is easy to understand. Considering the page has a focus on children, it was apparent the language was somewhat aimed for that audience.

Minimize user memory load: The exercise was intuitive enough that nothing really had to be “remembered” throughout the course of the walkthrough.

Be consistent: The layout and color scheme which denoted what actions did what remained unchanged and consistent throughout the course of the exercise.

Provide feedback: The exercise encouraged experimentation and exploration, thus providing a rather limited amount of user feedback beside the resulting action on the cat itself. Additionally, x and y coordinates were provided as another form of locality feedback.

Provide clearly marked exits: The large scratch button returns the user home. Additionally, most browsers include an exit feature that is always available.

Provide shortcuts: The exercise is so intuitive, not many shortcuts are available, nor are they necessary.

Good error messages: The user is “sandboxed” within the virtual landscape so it is hard for him/her to make an error in that regard. The interface does however prompt if you attempt to leave/exit without saving your changes, which some may regard as a user error.

Prevent errors: Again, the quality of the software development was high enough to prevent the user from running into an error of any kind (in my observations at least).