

Usability Testing Plan

1. Name of your software project

2. Purpose of the test and research questions

Good research questions are focused, narrow, specific, answerable, feasible and open (they ask 'what', 'why' and 'how'). Once you have decided on your main research question, break it down into more specific questions. Research questions determine the rest of your research plan, and are the secret to a successful study, so choose them wisely!

3. Participants

How many people will take part in your usability study?

Remember: 5 is your reference number, but you aim to achieve “saturation”.

Recruitment criteria

What characteristics should your research participants have in order to answer your research questions?

Recruitment strategy

Where and how will you find your participants? How will you compensate them for their time and feedback?

4. Protocol

Method

This is where you explain if the tests will be co-located or remote, moderated or unmoderated, and who will attend the sessions (e.g. a moderator and a note-taker).

Test environment, equipment and logistics

Here you describe the software artefact you will present to participants (e.g. a test instance, an alpha version, a prototype), and the technical setup (e.g. what type of computer you will use, what recording equipment and software, any peripherals such as mouse or keyboard, etc.)

Session outline and timing

A standard usability testing session should last between 45' and 60'. It often includes an introduction to the activity, an opening interview, time for one or more tasks with the software and a final debrief.

Introduction to the session (5')

Some time to welcome the participant, explain the activity, the technical setup, sign consent forms, etc.

Introductory interview (10')

Use these questions to gather some insights on participants' context. Keep it brief: you only have 10 minutes!

Tasks (25')

In 25' you will likely have time for only one or two tasks. For each task provide a brief description, a criteria for success (what needs to happen for the participant to successfully complete the task) and the scenario you will provide to participants.

Post-test debriefing (5')

Leave some time at the end for a brief closing interview, a questionnaire on user satisfaction (e.g. System Usability Scale) or just to gather some final thoughts, reflections and feedback from the participant. This can be as simple as asking: "So, how did you find the application / website?"

Data to be collected and findings

Explain which data you will collect during the usability study (e.g. video recording of the screen and participant's facial expressions, task success rates, etc), when and how you will disseminate the findings (e.g. you may write a report, include some video clips from the sessions and schedule a presentation on a certain date).

Required documentation

List the documents you will need to produce and bring with you to the usability testing sessions. For instance, you may need consent forms, incentive receipts, the incentives themselves (e.g. a voucher or cheque), the usability testing script, questionnaires, etc.