

### Basic Usability Survey

1. Briefly describe why this document is used. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Evaluate the *content*:
  - Identify any irrelevant information. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Indicate any gaps in the information. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Identify any information that seems inaccurate. \_\_\_\_\_
  - List other problems with the content. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Evaluate the *organization*:
  - Identify anything that is out of order or hard to locate or follow. \_\_\_\_\_
  - List other problems with the organization. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Evaluate the *style*:
  - Identify anything you misunderstood on first reading. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Identify anything you couldn't understand at all. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Identify expressions that seem wordy, inexact, or too complex. \_\_\_\_\_
  - List other problems with the style. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Evaluate the *design*:
  - Indicate any headings that are missing, confusing, or excessive. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Indicate any material that should be designed as a list. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Give examples of material that might be clarified by a visual. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Give examples of misleading or overly complex visuals. \_\_\_\_\_
  - List other problems with design. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Identify anything that seems misleading or that could create legal problems or cross-cultural misunderstanding. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Please suggest other ways of making this document easier to use. \_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 16.4 A Basic Usability Survey** Versions of these questions can serve as a basis for beta testing (by the document's users).

**CHECKLIST for Usability**

(Numbers in parentheses refer to the first page of discussion.)

**Content**

- ☐ Is all material relevant to this user for this task? (38)
- ☐ Is all material technically accurate? (169)
- ☐ Is the level of technicality appropriate for this audience? (30)
- ☐ Are warnings and cautions inserted where needed? (546)
- ☐ Are claims, conclusions, and recommendations supported by evidence? (56)
- ☐ Is the material free of gaps, foggy areas, or needless details? (39)
- ☐ Are all key terms clearly defined? (481)
- ☐ Are all data sources documented? (685)

**Organization**

- ☐ Is the structure of the document visible at a glance? (219)
- ☐ Is there a clear line of reasoning that emphasizes what is most important? (222)
- ☐ Is material organized in the sequence users are expected to follow? (235)
- ☐ Is everything easy to locate? (219)
- ☐ Is the material "chunked" into easily digestible parts? (239)

**Style**

- ☐ Is each sentence understandable the first time it is read? (245)
- ☐ Is rich information expressed in the fewest words possible? (253)
- ☐ Are sentences put together with enough variety? (260)
- ☐ Are words chosen for exactness, and not for camouflage? (264)
- ☐ Is the tone appropriate for the situation and audience? (274)

**Design**

- ☐ Is page design inviting, accessible, and appropriate for the user's needs? (340)
- ☐ Are there adequate aids to navigation (heads, lists, type styles)? (344)
- ☐ Are adequate visuals used to clarify, emphasize, or summarize? (291)
- ☐ Do supplements accommodate the needs of a diverse audience? (643)

**Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Considerations**

- ☐ Does the document indicate sound ethical judgment? (74)
- ☐ Does the document comply with copyright law and other legal standards? (85)
- ☐ Does the document respect users' cultural diversity? (59)



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**EXERCISES**

1. As a class, identify an activity that could require instructions for a novice to complete (for example, surviving the first week of college as a commuter). Using the outline on page 368 as a model, prepare a task outline of the steps and substeps for this activity (for example, "1. Obtain essential items: campus map, ID card, parking sticker," and so on; "2. Get to know the library"; "3. Get to know your advisor"; "4. Establish a campus support network"). Exchange task outlines with another student in your class and critique each

other's outlines. Revise your outline and be prepared to discuss it in class.

2. Find a set of instructions or some other technical document that is easy to use. Assume that you are Associate Director of Communications for the company that produced this document and you are doing a final review before the document is released. With the Checklist for Usability as a guide, identify those features that make the document usable and prepare a memo to your boss that justifies your decision to release the document.