Heuristic Evaluation

For each heuristic, you should cite one example in your wireframe either illustrating how the heuristic suggests an improvement, or pointing to a design decision you made that supports the heuristic. You must evaluate *at least 8* of these.

1. **Speak the User's Language** - *use simple terms; word very carefully; never blame user*

   We speak the user's language by providing helpful error messages that are worded in terms of the user's experience rather than in terms of backend processes beyond their understanding. For example, when the user visits the profile page of a nonexistent user, we display the message: "User does not exist! Click here to go to the homepage," rather than "user is undefined," for example. Similarly, when the user does not follow any other user, we write, "You aren't following any users! Go to Explore to discover other users!" on their homepage.

   In addition, when visiting an invalid url (ex. hizami-ellenwan-fritter.herokuapp.com/hi), we display a 404 page with the message: "Oops. This page doesn't exist. Click back here to go home." We never blame the user for deviating from the intended browsing experience and gently nudge them back in the right direction.

2. **Consistent Naming & Icons** - *consistent; same name or symbol for a concept or action*

   We use the same symbol to represent the same concept across pages. For example, sorting by likes and liking a Freet use the same heart icon. We use consistent icons to represent each user as well. All users are represented by the same symbol - a circular icon with the first letter of their username. This same symbol is used to open their account dropdown in the navbar and serve as an icon for their profile page and all their posts.

3. **Follow Conventions** - *beware of violating conventions*

   We follow typical social media conventions across the site. All icons are conventional for their given functionality; the edit button is a pencil, the delete button is a trash can, etc. We also use the conventional social media terms when describing their functionality in the tooltip, such as like and follow. We also follow page layout conventions. The navbar is consistently at the top of the page, and Freets are displayed in a typical social media feed, with cards laid out in a column.

4. **Show Location & Structure** - *make user's location (and state) visible*

We show the user's location by designing a fine-grained pagination structure. We display different urls for each page the user visits (Home, Explore, Profile), as well as for each different profile page (ex. /profile/ellen vs /profile/hizami) and each sorting scheme (ex. /explore?sort=likes). We also separate out the feed with followed users from the global feed with two different pages - Home and Explore. In this fashion, the user is aware of their navigation path through our webapp and can backtrack easily using the back button if needed.

5. **Accelerators** - *provide accelerators for expert users*

We provide an autocomplete search bar for navigating to other users' profile pages. When the user first focuses the search bar, a drop down appears with possible usernames to search for. As the user continues typing, the drop down filters out usernames that aren't prefixed with the input string. This autocomplete search bar acts as an accelerator that enables users to search for other profiles more quickly. Another accelerator is our signup functionality. After creating an account, the user is immediately logged in. They don't have to create an account, navigate to the login popup, and sign in separately. We automate this process since most users wish to be logged in right away with their newly created account.

6. **Keep Paths Short** - *minimize steps to reach common functions*

We provide several shortcuts for common functionality on our site. First, we allow users to click on a username within a Freet post to navigate to the user's profile rather than typing their username in the search bar. We also redirect users to the explore or profile page after posting a Freet, since users would not see their Freets on their homepage - where only followed users show up. In this way, users can see their posted Freet immediately. We also place the "Create Freet" button and search bar in the navbar. This way, regardless of how far the user scrolls down their feed, they can always reach these two features quickly. This design saves the user scrolling time, minimizing the time needed to reach these crucial pieces of functionality.

7. **Undo & Cancel -** *are user errors mitigated?*

   We allow users to undo or cancel nearly every functionality on the site. For Freet editing, users can undo liking, following by simply toggling an icon. Users can undo posting by deleting the post, and users are also able to cancel Freet creation or Refreeting in the process of posting by simply closing a pop up. Users are even able to delete their entire account (though, while we warn users before doing so and allow them to cancel, there is no way to undo deleting an entire account). We designed our websites so that mistakes are easily fixable, giving a more pleasant user experience.

8. **Gestalt Principle of Grouping** - *use visual layout to convey structure*

   Our website is designed such that all similar items are grouped together and aligned. Freets are grouped together in the leftmost column of the page, while Refreets for a given Freet are grouped in a secondary column to the right. Navigation tools appear in the navbar, with page links appearing on the left and an account dropdown appearing on the right. The account dropdown groups all buttons that manage the user's account, namely the settings popup and the logout button. Finally, each page contains a sort container with a row of sort options that sort the Freet column below it. This design that prioritizes intuitive grouping lends itself to a more intuitive browsing experience. Users automatically understand where to find a given feature based on the page layout. This grouping also helps organize crowded pages such that they can be understood more easily.

9. **Recognition vs Recall -** *reduce recall burden on user*

   Our website has very few functions that a user has to recall to be able to use. Each freet has icons representing functionality that a user can recognize (and even if they don't recognize, they can always hover over the icon to figure out what it does). There are no complex or obscure menus a user must remember how to navigate to access relevant functionalities - most functionalities are displayed right on the surface, represented by easily-recognizable icons.