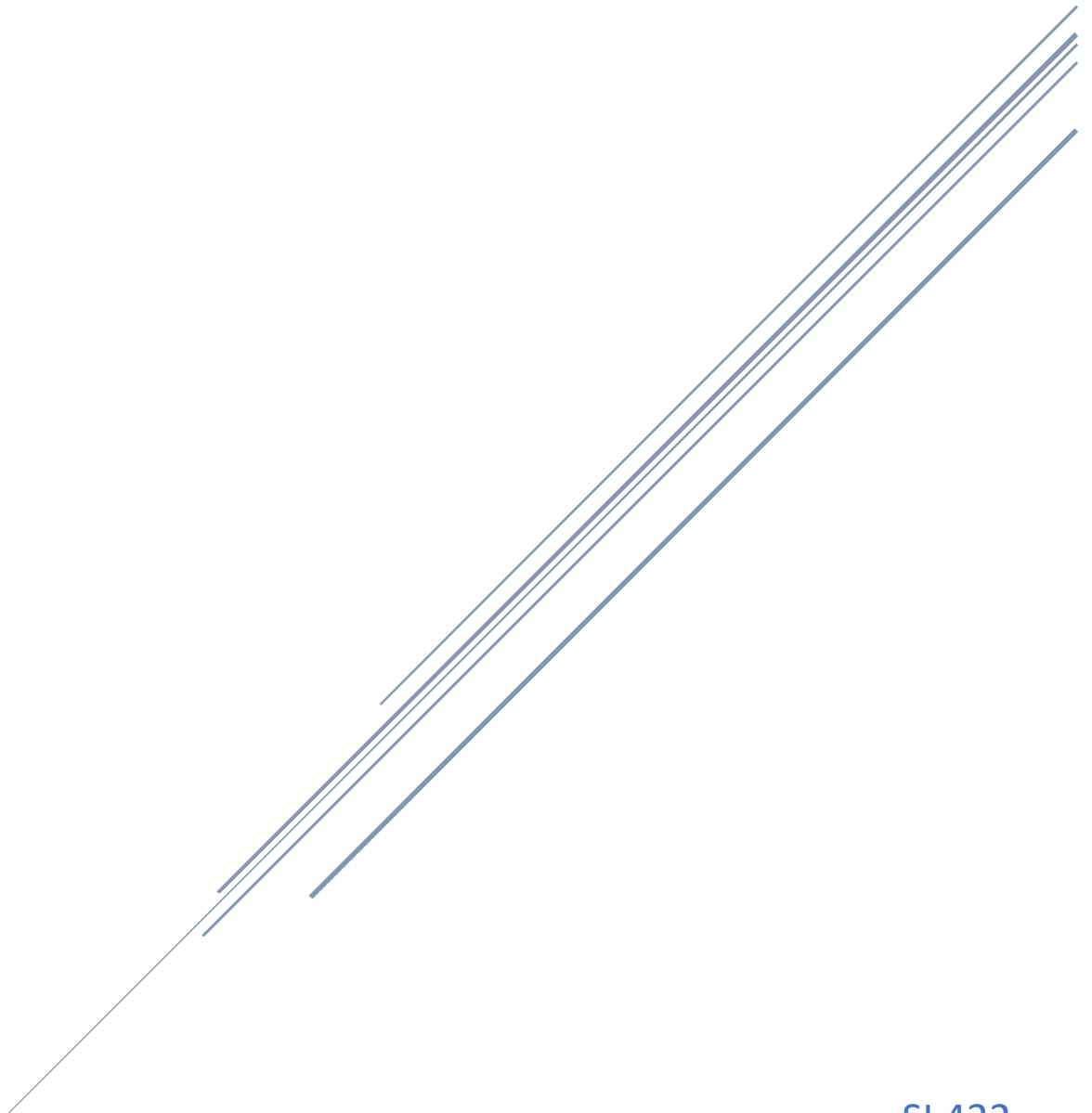


# HEURISTIC EVALUTION

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## Introduction

Founded in June of 2005, Reddit was designed as a 'social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion site' ("Reddit"). Analytics ranking site Alexa placed the site 7<sup>th</sup> in the U.S., based on a combination of average daily visitors and page views over past three months ("Reddit Traffic and Statistics"). Often overshadowed by popular social media sites, Reddit has acquired a niche following of core Internet users. Reddit's Wikipedia pages describes further:

*Reddit's registered community members can submit content, such as text posts or direct links. Registered users can then vote submissions up or down to organize the posts and determine their position on the site's pages. The submissions with the most positive votes appear on the front page or the top of a category. Content entries are organized by areas of interest called "subreddits". The subreddit topics include news, science, gaming, movies, music, books, fitness, food, and image-sharing, among many others. The site's terms of use prohibit behaviors such as harassment, and moderating and limiting harassment has taken substantial resources. ("Reddit")*

In 2015, Reddit amassed 82.54 billion pageviews, over 36 million users and 88,700 active subreddits (Reddit Originals). Signing up is free and only requires a valid email address. Research by the Pew Center found seven in ten users are male, half of which identify as liberal. 4% of U.S. adults use Reddit, of which 64% fall between the ages of 18 and 29. As expected, 47% of users said they are constantly on the Internet (Barthel).

## Process

To aggregate my findings, I began by outlining areas of focus: Homepage evaluation, navigation, user control/ability, and profile page. I strayed away from a focus on subreddit's since they vary drastically from page to page. As a user, I assumed what tasks the average user would encounter on a visit. This included voting, navigation between threads, posting, commenting,

and feed engagement. The following questions were used to help guide process (“How to Conduct a Heuristic Evaluation”),

1. Describe the usability problem
2. What task and step was being attempted when the problem occurred?
3. Where in the product did the problem arise?
4. Which heuristic was violated?
5. What is the priority and severity?
6. What solution will solve the problem?

The scale considers two factors for ten possible points, five for priority and five for severity. Scoring a five equates either high priority or high severity, thus high total scores deem quick action.

	1	2	3	4	5
Priority	Low Priority, issue but not significant	Medium-Low Priority	Medium Priority, issue must be considered	Medium-High Priority	High Priority, issue of vital correction, immediate response
Severity	Low Severity, no significant hindering of user	Medium-Low Priority	Medium Severity, issue considerably hinders users	Medium-High Priority	High Severity, issue vitally hinders user, unable to act

## Homepage Evaluation

Reddit’s homepage is packaged into four main components: two navigation bars on left and top of page, a central feed organized by popularity and subscribed threads, a search bar, and content creation on the right. The first problem was apparent immediately. The design feels cluttered. There is a lot of information being presented on a single page, without much assistance to comprehend. I asked a few friends who’ve never seen Reddit to navigate and read stories (without stating my opinion). In concordance, they felt it difficult to understand. One friend described it as being handed a “Rubix cube”, it looked cool but he had no idea what to do with it. This makes it hard to new users to integrate, especially those without “constant” Internet use. The problem arose on the homepage. Without knowledge of how content is sorted, coupled with the wide variety of content, it’s difficult to understand where content is generated and how it is presented. There is a lack of personalization until a user learns how curation operates. This problem violates the *Recognition rather than Recall* heuristic, as users

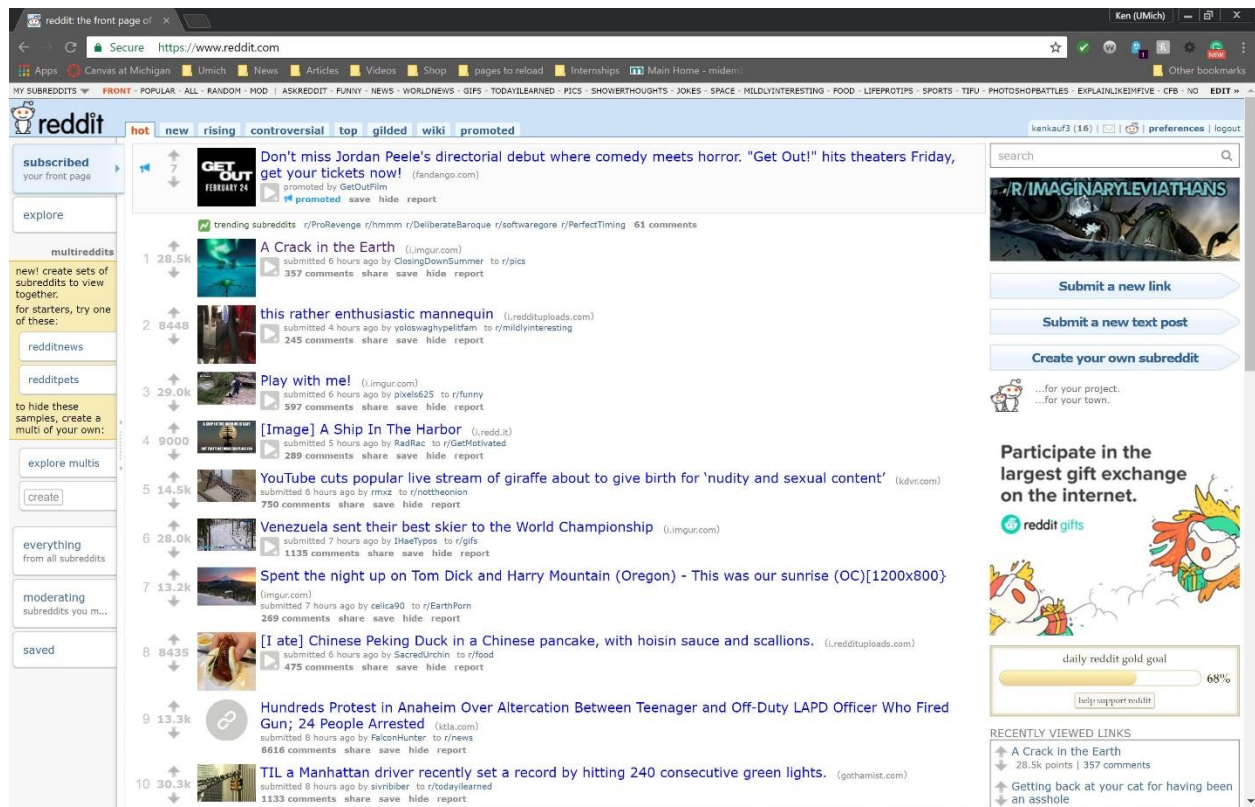


Figure 1: Screenshot of Reddit home page

don't have ready instructions for use of the system. This problem is A tutorial would disambiguate this process. **[Priority: 3, Severity: 4]**

Additionally, the help button is difficult to find. With the homepage full of information, it becomes buried at the bottom. It was much easier to Google "Reddit F.A.Q.'s" than locate it. This occurred when searching for help on site navigation and general usage information. This violates the *Help and Documentation* heuristic. Placing a help button in the navigation bar or near the home/profile button would help users locate it. Once the help button was discovered, it was useful. **[Priority: 5, Severity: 4]**

As mentioned, the homepage is cluttered. It displays too much information at once, confusing the user. This violates the *Aesthetics and Minimalist design* heuristic. Updating the appearance will assist users in navigation and understanding. **[Priority: 4, Severity: 2]**

It is not possible for a user to remove content from their feed. This violates the *User Control and Freedom* heuristic. An addition of a remove button would help. **[Priority: 2, Severity: 5]**

## Navigation Bar

Thread to thread, Reddit has a navigation bar near the top. They read: Hot. New, Rising, Controversial, Top, Gilded, Wiki, Promoted.



Figure 2: Reddit navigation bar

The wording of a few tabs is confusing, particularly Controversial, Gilded and Wiki. When Controversial is selected, the user is unaware of how the action changes the feed, what does Reddit mean by controversial and how do they gauge it? Gilded means wealthy, but there is no connection between that and where a user is redirected. The Wiki tab is still under construction, so it has no use. This violates the heuristic of *Consistency and Standards*. It would help if, when hovering over the tab, a pop up bubble explained the action. [**Priority: 4, Severity: 4**]

There are some redundant buttons that clutter space. On the homepage navigation bar, there are three different links that lead to the homepage, three to see all subreddits, and other multiple points of engagement. While this may allow a variety of options for navigating, it also may overwhelm a user. This violates the *Minimalist design* heuristic. It may be best to centralize certain tasks to avoid confusion. [**Priority: 2, Severity: 3**]

## Posting Content

Reddit prides itself on the ability to secure a safe, informative environment. Reddit is often critiqued on its facilitation of degrading or harmful content. Thus, each subreddit follows [Reddit Guidelines](#) and can implement their own. This makes posting content extremely difficult. One rule for all posts are Title Guidelines, examples being “must contain accurate information” and “must not be design to elicit sympathy” (<https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/wiki/titles>). Who’s to say what title is “designed to elicit sympathy”? The lines are grey. These rules hinder new users to post, since they must learn the process or risk their content being removed. Although Reddit does a great job documenting rules, they violate the *Match System and Real World* heuristic. [**Priority: 4, Severity: 5**]

Unwelcome content

Prohibited behavior

NSFW (Not Safe For Work) content

Enforcement

Moderation within communities

revisions

## Unwelcome content

2 While Reddit generally provides a lot of leeway in what content is acceptable, here are some guidelines for content that is not. Please keep in mind the spirit in which these were written, and know that looking for loopholes is a waste of time.

3 Content is prohibited if it

- Is **illegal**
- Is **involuntary pornography**
- **Encourages or incites violence**
- **Threatens, harasses, or bullies** or encourages others to do so
- **Is personal and confidential information**
- **Impersonates** someone in a misleading or deceptive manner
- Is **spam**

## Prohibited behavior

4 In addition to not submitting unwelcome content, the following behaviors are prohibited on Reddit

- Asking for votes or **engaging in vote manipulation**
- **Breaking Reddit** or doing anything that interferes with normal use of Reddit
- Creating multiple accounts to evade punishment or avoid restrictions

## NSFW (Not Safe For Work) content

5 Content that contains nudity, pornography, or profanity, which a reasonable viewer may not want to be seen accessing in a public or formal setting such as in a workplace should be tagged as NSFW. This tag can be applied to individual pieces of content or to entire communities.

Figure 3: List of some Reddit Guidelines

## Profile Page

The profile page is poorly designed and missing a header. It displays a feed of personal posts/ comments, and votes, but it doesn't specify that information anywhere. A user trying to understand the feed will be confused. This violates the *Visibility of System* heuristic. **[Priority: 2, Severity: 5]**

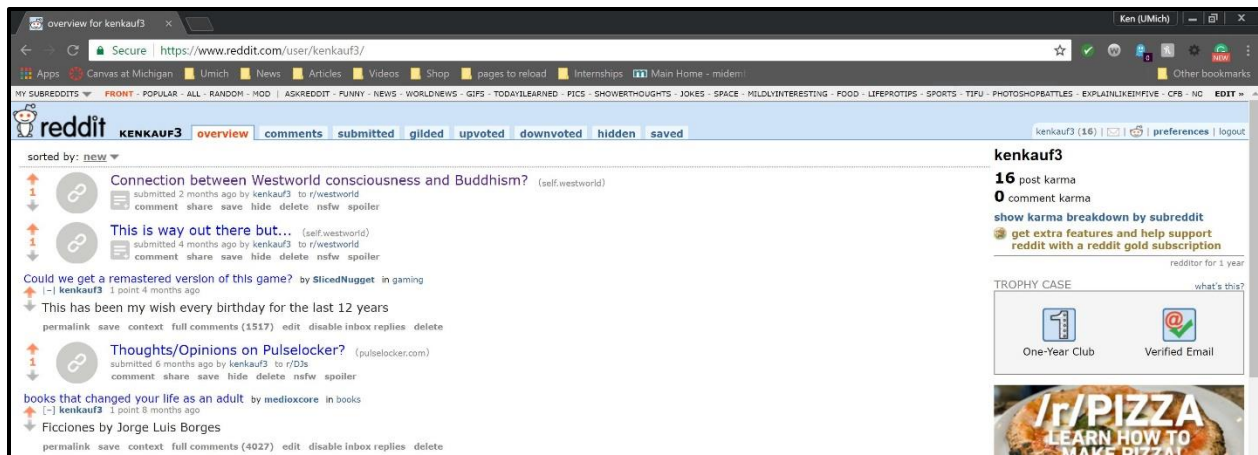


Figure 4: Reddit profile page

## Summary

In conclusion, Reddit offers a site catered to Web-familiar users. It successfully maintains a informative, regulated news and leisure site. The customization of subreddit's allows users to find a unique community or start their own. For those who understand it, it is a good site. However, it has many issues with new users. Those unfamiliar with the site, and the Internet in general, it's tough to navigate. The design needs to be updated, especially the way the feed presents content. This may explain why most users are under the age of 30, male, and web friendly

## Appendix

Homepage Usability	Score (1-Great, 5-Poor)
Items focused on tasks	2
Key aspects presented	3
Ability to facilitate other actions	1
<b>Task Orientation</b>	
Easy registration	1
Easy to engage (post, share, etc)	3
<b>Navigation</b>	
Easy to switch between activates	1
Logical location for navigation buttons	1
Good links with trigger words	2
<b>Page Layout/Design</b>	



Pages only contain succinct and useful information	4
Consistent layouts per page	5
<b>Content Quality</b>	
Compelling and unique content	1
Content specifically created for site	1
Clear labeling, useful titles that make sense	3

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