

Heuristic Evaluation | Air Now

<http://www.airnow.gov>

Heuristic	Description	Analysis	Score [1 = does not meet heuristic; 4= completely meets heuristic]
Findable	<i>Can users easily locate what they need or expect from the site? Is findability consistent across devices?</i>	There is a lot of information on the landing page. Given the popularity of geolocation services, it is unclear at first if the page is providing the AQI value for the user's location, especially with the presence of the map. The form inputs are located at the top of the page to allow the user to enter their desired location. In addition, the AQI index values are readily available, as is the top 5 current forecasts, future forecasts and current AQI. The page also provides Announcements, Fire Conditions, Air Quality Basics, Health links, Learning Center links, links to additional apps and tools to access AQI and Popular links.	3
Accessible	<i>Can it be used via all expected channels & devices? How well does it work on "other" devices? Does it meet the levels of accessibility compliance?</i>	The site is not responsive, so accessing it from devices with smaller screens means the user has to zoom in and around the page to see and interact with different pieces of content on the site. It works as expected on larger screens. A quick evaluation with the Wave Accessibility tool shows that it meets some levels of accessibility compliance, but other areas could be improved. The site does include a notation about Accessibility, and that it is an on-going process.	2
Clear	<i>Is it easy to understand? Is the path to task completion obvious & free of distraction?</i>	There are several tasks a user could complete from the home page, and they do compete with each other. This reduces the ease with which a user can zero in on the actions that will help them complete their given task.	2
Communicative	<i>Is messaging used throughout? Is it effective for the tasks and context? Does the navigation & messaging help establish a sense of place that is consistent?</i>	Labeling is used for different areas, but at times the messaging assumes a level of understanding a user might not have, especially upon their first visit. A good example of this is the "Highest 5". They are listed prominently below the map of the U.S., but without following a link labeled "About the Highest 5", a user might not understand their value or purpose. The grouping of information is not overly apparent, and without further investigation, may not communicate to the user the relevance of different items.	2
Useful	<i>Are users able to complete the tasks that they set out to do? Are the navigation options clearly labeled, and take Users to where they want or need to go?</i>	Task completion is met with relative ease once the user takes some time to familiarize themselves with the different areas of content on the page. The AQI for their area is not automatically displayed, so they will have to take an action with the form at the top of the page to see find that information. The same is applicable to finding tips and ideas on how to be proactive in improving air quality.	3

Credible	<i>Is the design appropriate to the context of use and audience? Is it easy to verify credentials? Is help/support content where it is needed?</i>	The presentation of the AQI color and rating system is easily identifiable. Because of the large amount of content, a stronger visual hierarchy established through typography could help clarify the grouping and organization of content. A responsive design could be more beneficial as it would enable users to easily interact with content on any device. An About page and a FAQ page are readily available and linked to from the main page.	3
Controllable	<i>Are tasks and information a user would reasonably want to accomplish available? How well are errors anticipated and eliminated? When errors do occur, how easily can a User recover?</i>	Most of the common tasks a user interested in the air quality level are available, although a user might appreciate the ability to store locations and be easily able to recall them, instead of having to re-enter location information each time they visit the site. The main opportunity for an error to occur is when a user enters a zip code; in the case of an invalid zip code being entered, a clear error message is displayed, and options to view the available forecasts or return to the home page are presented to the user.	3
Valuable	<i>Is it desirable to the target user? Does it maintain conformity with expectations throughout the interaction across channels?</i>	The site presents a large amount of information that a user would want to interact with, but could benefit from helping the user locate the particular pieces of information that is most valuable to them.	2.5
Learnable	<i>Can it be grasped quickly? Is it memorable? Does it behave consistently enough to be predictable?</i>	Paths for task completion are consistent throughout the site, usually requiring the user to read through content and follow links to find more information. With some familiarization of the content, navigating the site is simple to do. There is a lot of content presented at once, however, and that could overwhelm the user, ultimately preventing them from becoming familiar because there are too many choices.	2.5
Delightful	<i>What are your differentiators from other similar experiences or competitors? How are user expectations not just met, but exceeded?</i>	Relevant content is presented, but not in a way that tries to anticipate users wants or needs, in turn helping them quickly achieve their tasks. In addition, the content presented is formal, and may feel unapproachable to some users.	2