

Expedia Travel Site

Expedia is a site catered to individuals looking to travel. There are a number of options available, including some bundle and save options that allow users to book flights, hotels, and transport all in one place. The website is designed to give travelers a lot of options, so there are many ways in which a person could book a trip.

Pre-Test

Today you will be testing the Expedia travel website. I will be reading from this script to keep the test on track. The purpose of this test is to help identify any usability issues that a user may experience on the site. Your responses will be anonymous. Because this is a voluntary study, you are not obligated to answer all questions and may leave at any time.

The test should take no more than 10 minutes. We'll be working through a single task, and I will be taking notes based on my observations. If you have any problems with the site, it is helpful for you to be honest about them. We are testing the design of the website, not your abilities. Please do your best to work through the task before asking for help so that we can learn about how users will solve the problems they encounter on their own.

At the end, we will work through a response sheet to talk about the overall experience.

Just as important to the test as what you do while completing the task, is what you are thinking. For that reason, it is helpful if you think aloud. Just say any thoughts or reactions to what you are seeing out loud, without any further explanation.

Any questions about the test?

Before we start, a few questions about your background.

What is your age?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

What do you do for a living?

How would you describe your experience with computers?

Test

Your task today is based on a hypothetical scenario in which using the site may be necessary. The scenario is as follows:

You just found out a friend is getting married the weekend of June 4th and they have asked that you attend. The wedding is in Queens, New York City. Not wanting to miss out on this chance to take a small vacation, you decide to arrive 5 days early (May 30th) and explore the city. You'll fly back the day after the wedding, June 5th. You're on a bit of a tight budget this year so you're looking for the cheapest available option. Since it is New York, renting a car would be futile, so you decide to forgo that aspect of travel and stick with just a flight and hotel. Use the website to book both. Remember to talk through your entire thought process out loud. I will send the link to the website in chat. Please click on it and begin sharing your screen.

<https://www.expedia.com/>

Homepage

Now that we're on the home page, what are your initial thoughts about the site?

Each page thereafter

Still feeling good? Is anything confusing or unclear?

After it's over

And that's the task! Pretty simple stuff. Just a few final questions.

Do you feel you got the best deal available based on the information you were given?

Are you confident that you could use the site to easily complete a similar task in the future?

Do you have any final thoughts about the website or the test?

Thank you again for your time. Please keep an eye out for future testing opportunities, we'd love to have you again.

End

Participants

Participant 1: 32 year old white female who works in retail management with travel experience, but no experience with Expedia. The user fits the profile because their demographic likely has disposable income to book trips, and the tech competency to do so online.

Participant 2: 26 year old white male who works as a business software consultant (no CIT background). Like the first participant, has travel experience, tech competency, and disposable income.

Participant 3: 27 year old white male. Currently not employed. Looking to take a gap year to travel the country with life's savings. I do not think there could be a more ideal participant.

Findings

Issue	Screen	Severity Rating	Recommendations
The arrow between the departure and return dates is too similar to the navigation arrow meant to move between months on the calendar	Homepage	Low	Make it clear to the user that the dates are the departure and arrival dates, and remove the arrow entirely
The format of every page is different. The reason this is an issue is that the location of the main button used for navigation is different on each successive page. The user has to hunt for it each time.	All	Severe	Find a design that works for every page and commit to it. Top recommendation here is a sticky menu which follows the user the whole way, so they always know where to click
There are too many options and drop-down menus on the hotel selection page.	Hotel Search	Moderate	The page in general is a mess, but narrowing down how many drop downs are at the top would be a good start to reduce the user's cognitive load. I recommend going with the latest convention here and hiding most of them behind a "filters" button
The user has to scroll way too far to select a room once they have chosen a hotel	Room Selection	Moderate	There is nothing clickable that would progress the booking of a trip immediately visible when the user arrives on the page. Even if it is redundant, there should immediately be something that says "select room" which takes the user directly to that section of the page.
Redundant filters regarding time on the flight selection page. There are some in the "sort by" drop down, as well as on the side of the page in the check filters	Flight Select	Low	Remove the filters on the side entirely to reduce clutter.

Summary

Because of the number of options on the website, each user took a slightly different approach to achieve the goal. Hearing each user think aloud is the primary way in which usability issues were found. All but the Room Selection issue were identified through the users' commentary about what they were doing. The Room Selection issue was identified by watching each user's mouse action searching for a button which they could not find—they likely did not notice they were doing this. The cognitive walkthrough I did to come up with the task for this test missed most of

the usability issues described above because my goals were different than the one pre-defined for the users.