

Heuristic Evaluation of AskSimple

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1. Problem

AskSimple is an app that helps students to participate in class anonymously and supports them in getting the answers they need as fast as possible.

2. Violations Found

1. [H2-1 Visibility of Status] [Severity 2] [Found by: D, E]

The interface show if a question is approved but do not show other status (e.g. rejected, unanswered).

2. [H2-1 Visibility of Status] [Severity 1] [Found by: E]

Question list design indicate some color or a different feature to demonstrate the level of popularity (e.g. Thumbs icon can have different colors).

3. [H2-1 Visibility of Status] [Severity 3] [Found by: A]

The sorting button isn't intuitive. I don't know what is going to happen after I click it

4. [H2-2 Match Sys & World] [Severity 2] [Found by: D, E]

The sorting function in the interface do not really make sense if it only sort based on likes/answers. Remove the sort or sort by other criteria.

5. [H2-2 Match Sys & World] [Severity 3] [Found by: A , B, E]

"Session active" is confusing, might look like a progress bar. I think "LIVE" with fire may be a more intuitive symbol

6. [H2-2 Match Sys & World] [Severity 1] [Found by: A]

How is each question "Approved"? Approved indication unclear.

7. [H2-2 Match Sys & World] [Severity 3] [Found by: D, E]

Although it is good to separate the questions for different days, the concept of session is not strongly related to the actual world. Replace it with date or # of class.

8. [H2-2 Match Sys & World] [Severity 3] [Found by: C, D]

The interface of TAs, teachers and students should differ in some ways. Make interface(s) for TAs and teachers.

- *Due to time constraints, this will most likely not be realized in the hi-fi prototype (also see readme)*

9. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 3] [Found by: B, D]

Add a "My questions" section in the menu so that the user can get to his/her own questions easily.

10. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 1] [Found by: E]

Add bookmark option for favorite questions

11. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 1] [Found by: C]

Questions and answers show a username and over time, people will know who this user name belongs to. Remove the user name if the app should stay anonymous.

12. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 0] [Found by: C]

If you register for a new course, can the user just see the active lecture and not the previous ones? Make the previous lectures accessible.

13. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 2] [Found by: C]

Switching from e.g. lecture 7 to lecture 6 is difficult, make it easier.

14. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 3] [Found by: A, B, D]

Cannot find the back button in many pages. Tapping on the question to return to the previous page is not obvious.

15. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 3] [Found by: D]

The icon for *Add courses* and *Add questions* is the same, which can be quite confusing. Make them different.

16. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 2] [Found by: D]

The lines separating the questions after sorting is different. Make them the same.

17. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 4] [Found by: D]

The thumbs up do not add up to the correct number, clicking the numbers shows weird things. Fix it.

18. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 2] [Found by: D]

Comments and questions have the same design. Give them different colours or separate them into different pages.

19. [H2-4 Consistency & Standards] [Severity 3] [Found by: C]

I cannot access the search model when I am watching the answers of a question. Fix it.

20. [H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity 2] [Found by: D]

Should notify the user when changing replies or comments. Add a pop up interface when users try to edit replies (like a Toast). Show history of replies.

21. [H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity 3] [Found by: D]

Field checking when registering is not in the interface. Remember to add it.

22. [H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity 3] [Found by: E]

Should the user not remember his SN and password, there is no way of resolving this problem. Provide a button that allows the user to reacquire access/account. Guide the user on an alternative means for this by verifying his/her identity via a phone text, alternate email, answering questions (favorite color, etc.) or some other checking feature.

- *Due to time and functionality constraints, this will most likely not be realized in the hi-fi prototype*

23. [H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity 2] [Found by: E]

Provide a method that allows for enough similarity that could detect or allow the user to enter a tag when posting a question/answer. Either umbrella tag or a sound when the word is not recognizable.

24. [H2-5 Error prevention] [Severity 0] [Found by: B]

Thumbs up: I can't find the way to thumbs down. I think the function is unimportant since the students in a course are fewer than common forum members(e.g. stackoverflow). Remove the function.

25. [H2-6 Recognition rather than recall] [Severity 2] [Found by: D]

The interface only show which session user is at but users might prefer to know what class they are having, not which sessions they are at. Display the class instead of sessions or add the information about class to the interface.

26. [H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity 1] [Found by: D]

The interface require users to click into questions to check for answers. Display top rated/suggested answers.

27. [H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design] [Severity 1] [Found by: C, D]

The "approved" is shown in the interface but there is not much functionality for it. Remove it or try to let users understand what it means.

28. [H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design] [Severity 2] [Found by: E]

The 'thanks for asking' after each submission can be seen as extra. Its cute, but the user may prefer to get back to coursework business. This extra need to tap again is a small annoyance. What purpose does it serve? You can remove it and instead allow the user to be taken to a question that might be remotely close to it. Another way of dealing with the little guy is to have him appear at the bottom or top of the question screen when the user is taken back so he doesn't take up the whole screen. Have him wave from those positions and then poof be gone.

29. [H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design] [Severity 2] [Found by: B]

Arrow down button in left sidebar is likely used to fold/unfold user information, but the amount of information is too little to fold it. Remove the button.

30. [H2-9 Help Users with Errors] [Severity 3] [Found by: B, E]

The user cannot delete his/her answer/question. This could be realized with a two-finger swipe or could be included in a "My questions/answer" section in the menu.

31. [H2-10 Documentation] [Severity 0] [Found by: D]

There is no readme, help or other documentation. Add it, at least to some part that is more confusing, eg. the sessions after course selection.

- *The team did provide a readme on the homepage. Apparently, not all evaluators did find it or look for it.*

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
[H2-1: Visibility of Status]		1	1	1		3
[H2-2: Match Sys & World]		1	1	3		5
[H2-3: User Control]	1	2	1	1		5
[H2-4: Consistency]			2	3	1	6
[H2-5: Error Prevention]	1		2	2		5
[H2-6: Recognition not Recall]			1			1
[H2-7: Efficiency of Use]		1				1
[H2-8: Minimalist Design]		1	2			3
[H2-9: Help Users with Errors]				1		1
[H2-10: Documentation]	1					1
Total Violations by Severity	3	6	10	11	1	31

4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D	Evaluator E
sev. 0	-	33%	33%	33%	-
sev. 1	17%	-	33%	33%	33%
sev. 2	-	10%	10%	60%	30%
sev. 3	27%	36%	18%	45%	36%
sev. 4	-	-	-	100%	-
total (sev. 3 & 4)	25%	33%	16%	50%	33%
total (all severity levels)	13%	19%	19%	48%	42%

5. Summary Recommendations

The app received a great amount of constructive criticism on its features that need to be improved for the hi-fi prototype. Especially in the area of match of system and the real world, consistency as well as error prevention, the app needs many small changes. Some indications such as the session title or the approved status of questions need more clarification and some other functions such as the upvote button need to be removed from bugs. Also, faster access between course sessions as well as an improved sorting and searching function need to be implemented in the next stage.