

How to be creative when writing test cases

What does it take?

Test cases aim to uncover any bugs and help document the expected behavior of a software application. Most of the times, junior QEs are given test cases to perform and validate, but they didn't write those test cases in the first place. And frankly, that's the fun part of the task, but it needs a keen eye to come up with as many use cases as possible.

This is not going to be a tutorial on testing, but a short article with some details to keep in mind when analyzing some feature functionality to come up with tests to perform on it.

A few suggestions...



When presented with an application or a feature to analyze and write test cases about, possibilities are endless. There could be dozens of settings and combinations that can be tested, "happy paths" (what the user would normally do), edge cases, positive and negative tests... to name a few. But what if we're stuck and can't think of anything, or the application is new for us and we don't know how to deal with it? Then maybe these suggestions might come in handy:

- Think of any **settings** that could be tweaked and all possible combinations.
- Think of any **other feature** that communicates or depends on the feature being tested and how they interact. *E.g.: a text editor can be used to create articles, but the application also allows to use widgets for quick-content creation. So you might want to think about where else the text editor could show up.*
- Think of any **similar use cases**. *E.g.: using the text editor example, if it allows formatting (like bold, italic, etc.) and also adding quoted text, it might be good to check if formatting can be applied on quoted text.*
- **Be creative**. Try to come up with steps in a different order, vary the workflow a little bit, change just one step, do something in a slightly different way. *As an example, let's say the application allows inviting new users to join. So the happy path would be to just send an invitation as a regular user, but what happens if the user had already been a member and then left the community before being re-invited? or they were banned and are now being invited again? What if they never accepted the invite and the invitation is sent again?* Sometimes there are almost endless combinations and possible use cases; wisely pick the ones that will not leave some area of the feature uncovered.
- Push it to the limits. If there's nothing else, maybe you can find some **edge case**. *For instance, if testing new user registration, what could happen if you entered an unusually long name? (like very, very long).*

What if I'm stuck?

1. Go through available documentation that you can read for reference: how-to's, existing test plans, design documents, etc.
2. Try to find any related bug reports, as sometimes they provide some context and shed some light on related features.
3. If you're not acquainted with the application or feature, play with it for a while, see what to expect from it. If there's someone you can ask for more information (maybe a dev or a product designer), don't miss the opportunity.



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