

Preparing for Usability Testing

You test a wireframe by making up tasks and scenarios, usually all related to navigation.

Examples:

“How would you find _____?”

“What would you expect to see when you click on this link?”

Creating a tasks list

First you choose the tasks to test—the things you want them to try to do.

Examples:

- Book an appointment online
- Find contact information
- Purchase a chainsaw

The first step is to jot down a list of the _most important tasks_ that people need to be able to do on your app.

Make a list of 3–5 of the most important things people need to be able to do when using your app.

Decide which tasks to test

Once you have your tasks list, you need to decide which ones you want to test.

Your choice of which tasks to test is based on these factors:

1. **What are your most critical tasks?** These are the things that people must be able to do. If they can't do them, your app will be a failure. For instance, if you're selling books online, people need to be able to find books they're interested in and they have to be able to pay for them.
2. **What's worrying you about your app design?** What are the things that you suspect people are going to have trouble with? Do you think something may be confusing or unclear to users?

Create scenarios

Convert the task description into a script that the user can *read, understand, and follow*.

Example:

Task: Complete a purchase

Scenario: You need to buy a chainsaw in preparation for the zombie apocalypse. It needs to be a gas-powered saw and you need it delivered as soon as possible in case the undead begin to rise. Order the chainsaw with rush shipping.

A scenario provides some context (“You are...,” “You need to...”) and supplies information the user needs to know, but doesn’t (e.g., username and password for a test account).

Don’t go overboard: trim any detail that doesn’t contribute.

The big challenge in writing scenarios is *not giving clues* in the scenario.

You have to phrase each scenario so that it’s clear, unambiguous, and easy to understand, and you have to do it without using uncommon or unique words that appear on the screen. If you do, you turn the task into a simple game of word-finding.

Remember: You are not asking for feedback “What do you think?” or opinion “Do you like this?”. You are asking them to figure something out to see if they can navigate your app.

Once you have your scenarios worked out, print them, one per page, so you can give them to your test participants.

Creating the wireframes

Once you have your scenarios worked out, it is time to assemble your wireframes (if you haven’t already).

When testing wireframes, you need to prepare every screen, dropdown, dialogue, etc., that the user may encounter. You can do this by drawing multiple screens or by creating extra pages that you overlap on the wireframes.

The nice thing about paper prototyping is that if something isn't working, you can literally sketch out a solution and test it on the spot!

You can find some great sketch templates at interfacesketch.com

There are also lots of online apps that can help you draw your wireframes out, such as Balsamiq.com

After an initial paper prototype, you could also try Adobe's new [Experience Design](#) app to build out more sophisticated tests.

Check out: youtu.be/GrV2SZuRPvo for an example of paper prototyping