

Usability Testing Lab Worksheet

This worksheet will guide you through a usability testing lab focused on evaluating the form you designed and built for your coursework. We will explore key usability concepts and apply practical testing methods to gather valuable feedback and improve your form's design.

Time: 2 hours

Section 1: Introduction to Usability (20 minutes)

Objectives:

- Understand the core principles of usability.
- Identify common usability issues in form design.
- Discuss the importance of user-centred design.

Activities:

1. **Brainstorm:** In groups, discuss what makes a website or application "usable." Consider factors like ease of use, efficiency, memorability, errors, and user satisfaction.
2. **Case Study Analysis:** Analyse examples of well-designed and poorly designed forms. Look at examples from government digital services (e.g., GOV.UK) and commercial websites for comparison. Identify the key differences and their impact on usability.
3. **Usability Principles Review:** Review Jakob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics (<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>) and discuss how they apply to form design.

Section 2: Planning Your Usability Test (20 minutes)

Objectives:

- Define clear objectives for your usability test.
- Identify your target user group and recruit participants.
- Develop realistic tasks for participants to perform.
- You will also want to think about things like informed consent, right to withdraw, data retention policies etc.

Activities:

1. **Define Objectives:** What specific aspects of your form do you want to test? (e.g., ease of understanding labels, efficiency of completion, error prevention)
2. **Participant Recruitment:** Determine who your target users are and recruit 3-5 participants who represent that group. Consider your course-mates, friends, or family members who fit the user profile. If you need to you can pop to the library or one of the other departments to recruit users, but you can mostly work with other students in the lab.

3. **Task Development:** Create 3-5 specific tasks for participants to complete using your form (e.g., “Fill out the form with *this* information,” “Try to submit the form with missing required fields”). Refer to your form’s purpose and user needs when defining tasks. Hopefully the use (misuse) of the form will tease out some issues. Try to break your colleague’s form if you can.

Section 3: Conducting the Usability Test (40 minutes)

Objectives:

- Practise different usability testing methods (e.g., think-aloud protocol).
- Gather qualitative and quantitative data from participants.
- Observe and document user behaviour and feedback.

Activities:

1. **Test Facilitation:** One person acts as the facilitator, guiding the participant through the tasks and encouraging them to think aloud. Another person acts as the observer, taking notes and recording any issues. For this exercise you might want to have a go at both simultaneously as the tasks are quite simple.
2. **Think-Aloud Protocol:** Encourage participants to verbalise their thoughts and actions as they interact with the form. Prompt them with questions like “What are you thinking now?” or “What do you expect to happen?”
3. **Data Collection:** Record observations, task completion times, errors made, and any comments from participants. Use a structured observation sheet or a simple notebook to capture data. You can find lots of these templates on the NNGroup site - <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/free-ux-templates/>

Section 4: Analysing and Interpreting Results (30 minutes)

Objectives:

- Identify usability problems and their severity.
- Prioritise areas for improvement based on user feedback.
- Generate concrete recommendations for redesign.

Activities:

1. **Data Synthesis:** Compile all observations, notes, and recordings from the usability tests. Look for patterns and common themes.
2. **Issue Identification:** Identify recurring patterns of user errors, confusion, or frustration.
3. **Severity Rating:** Rate the severity of each usability issue (e.g., low, medium, high) based on its impact on user experience and frequency of occurrence. I like to use a combination of ratings for both severity and

likelihood of occurrence. You can mix and match numbers with something like a traffic light system for this.

Section 5: Reporting and Redesign (10 minutes)

Objectives:

- Communicate your findings in a clear and concise report.
- Translate user feedback into actionable design improvements.

Activities:

1. **Report Writing (Word limit: 200 words):** Briefly summarise your usability testing process, key findings, and recommendations for improvement. Focus on the most critical usability issues and suggest specific design changes. Throw the useful bits into comments in your coursework.

Remember: Usability testing is an iterative process. By repeating this cycle of testing, analysis, and redesign, you can continuously improve the user experience of your form.