*Usability of Hulu Website Help Services*

*Sahana Melkris   
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# Heuristic Evaluation Form:

Rating Scale

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Severity Rating | Definition |
| 3 | Impedes task completion (either product or information seeking) |
| 2 | Creates annoyance |
| 1 | Obscures a product feature or capability |
| 0 | Raises questions for further study |

Cycles

1. Efficiency
2. Recognition
3. Familiarity
4. Readability and aesthetics
5. Consistency
6. Clarity

## Cycle 1: Efficiency

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| The user finds that frequently-sought information is at high levels of the structure. | 0 | True: pricing and login are found at the top along with the latest features for purchase. |
| Within headings, the most important words come first. | 0 | True: headings concisely describe the plan, free trial period and pricing before the section describes details. |
| Layered information and branching provide minimalist paths through information. | 1 | Problem: There are 4 plans, hulu with and without ads and hulu with live tv with and without ads. On the homepage they mention the hulu and hulu with live tv options but make it seem like these are plans in themselves and not types of plans.  However they generally made a good attempt at a structure. On the help page for pricing plans, 3 bubbles for each plan can be clicked on to view additional details for that plan. Underneath that is pricing for add on features. Also, other help pages such as account and billing have long paragraphs of sequential information on same page with internal links at the top to take you to the appropriate section within the page |
| Related information is positioned where most easily noticed. | 1 | Problem: the top displays only the most popular pricing plan, then as you scroll down there’s an additional pricing plan, but the full list of pricing plans are located through a link way at the bottom under help section. |
| The user can easily identify how to access online help or the online manual (or additional help) | 1 | Problem: The help section is located at the very bottom in the footer of the webpage along with several other links |

## Cycle 2: Recognition

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| Titles inform without the context of surrounding information. | 0 | True: titles concisely describe information without having to read the following paragraphs just to understand what the section is about. |
| Index keywords are easy to recognize and distinguish. | n/a |  |
| Symbols and color reinforce information structure. | 0 | True: coloring is relevant to hierarchy of information |

## Cycle 3: Familiarity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| Titles represent real-world concepts and tasks. | 0 | True: titles are realistic and should be recognizable to the average person seeking hulu subscription |
| Symbols do not conflict with other common uses, such as international symbols. | 0 | True: symbols aren’t easily confused with other meanings |
| New terms are defined at every occurrence. | 2 | The word “add on” is below each of the pricing plans below its main features at the bottom of the homepage, but it does not mention that add ons require extra money per month until you go to the official pricing and plans page. The meaning of “add on” should be fully described so as not to mislead new viewers. |

## Cycle 4: Readability and Aesthetics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| Information is presented in a size and color easy to read. | 0 | True: coloring and size contributes to information being easy on the eyes. Words not too small. |
| Different levels of headings are easy to distinguish. | 0 | True: main heading is black or dark grey and bolded, while subsequent information is lighter in color |
| Information is pleasing to the eye. | 0 | True |

## Cycle 5: Consistency

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| Headings at the same level in a section use parallel structure to help users identify the information they cover. | 0 | True: pricing plans are easily comparable with parallel structure |
| Presentation of information on various pages is consistent so that differences between pages are meaningful. | 2 | Problem: for the $5.99/month plan, one of the extra cost add on features is listed as “No Ads.” In reality to get the ad-free feature you need to subscribe for a separate Hulu plan-the $11.99/month plan. “No ads” is not listed under list of add on features on the “Plans and Pricing page” under “Help,” yet is listed as an add on feature for the $5.99 plan as if it’s related to the plan.  Problem2: When clicking on the bubble for the $5.99 plan (the cheapest and most popular plan), instead of referring to the plan pricing and making a list, it goes to a page titled “what is hulu,” with some paraphraphs including some details about the add ons. |
| Words have the same meaning from one use to another. | 0 | True: words have consistent meanings. |

## Cycle 6: Clarity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Severity Rating** | **Problem** |
| Information pieces can be read in any order, or a guide to the order is provided. | 0 | True: there is a page called “Getting Started With Hulu,” which helps you navigate all the pages. |
| Reused information retains meaning in any context. | 0 | True: generally yes, reused information does not change according to context |
| Meaning holds no matter how the user combines the information pieces. | 0 | True: while some information may be missing in the homepages compared with the rest of the help documents, the meaning of the information is still consistent with the rest of the documentation |

**Summarizing Report:**

# Summarizing Report Introduction:

This document is for Hulu’s technical writing department manager. In this paper, I will elaborate on the usability of the Hulu website’s help services based on its heuristic evaluation. In the heuristic evaluation, I have identified certain high priority issues with the Hulu website’s help documentation related to the consistency, efficiency and familiarity cycles of the heuristic form. Since Hulu is an online media streaming service that charges their subscribers for access to their video content, I will be analyzing documentation on its pricing and subscription models and streaming features. It will be from my perspective as an evaluator.

# Issues and Recommendations:

## 

## Consistency:

### Issues:

The criteria about the presentation of information on various pages being consistent was not entirely met. For example, they described the cheapest $5.99/month plan as having an “ad-free” add-on feature in their drop-down list. However, when you go to the “Pricing & Plans” page at the bottom, you don’t see “ad-free” as an official feature under the lists of different add-ons you can purchase. The only way to get ad-free content is through the other subscription plan for $11.99/month. The way this information is setup made me think I could get the $5.99/month plan and perhaps pay a few extra dollars to make it “ad-free” when in fact I need to subscribe to a different plan entirely (the $11.99/month plan).

Another issue was that the sections of the pricing plans are scattered throughout the homepage, streaming service pages and help sections. This was confusing for me because when I visit the “Streaming Library”, “TV Shows”, and “Live TV” pages in the footer, it shows all pricing plans except for the $60.99 ad-free Hulu+LiveTV plan. Meanwhile, on the home page it only shows the two with-ad pricing plans of $5.99 and $11.99 per month. To see the ad-free Hulu+LiveTV plan, you need to visit the official “Pricing and Plans” page in the footer. Only displaying certain plans on certain pages can prevent the reader from being able to make a quick decision on their purchase.

Additionally, there was a lack of consistency between pages and their links. When clicking on the bubble for the $5.99 plan (the cheapest and most popular plan) in the “Pricing and Plans” page, instead of referring to the plan pricing in the title, it goes to a page titled “What is Hulu,” followed by no related information. I felt it was lacking consistency between the page with all plans and the page with specific details for one plan.

### Recommendations

Instead of having a $5.99/month Hulu plan with “ad-free” as an add-on, they can remove that entirely as the ad-free option is based upon their subscription to the $11.99/month plan. This eliminates confusion for readers who may go to the add-on features page and not find an “ad-free” option.

Already here

Also, on each page they seem to have different sets of pricing plans, which they should try to make into the same set of plans on every page.

Another consistency improvement would be making sure that the titles are consistent from one page to another. If I click on the link for the $5.99/month pricing plan, I want the title of the following page to include the term “$5.99/month” and not simply “What is Hulu.”

## Efficiency:

### Issues:

The usage of layered information and branching to provide minimalist paths to information could be improved in certain areas. For example, instead of framing it as types of plans, the homepage framed these “Hulu” and “Hulu+LiveTV” subscription models as *actual purchase plans* with prices of $5.99 and $54.99 per month. It was confusing for me to see this on the homepage as I initially assumed those were the only plans, when there were also ad-free plans for $11.99 and $60.99 per month.

Another efficiency issue is that related information isn’t positioned where most easily noticed. For example, the most important information such as the help pages and the pricing plans are in obscure or random locations. On the homepage, there’s a banner at the top selling their lowest $5.99/month plan and at the bottom they list the two with-ad plans. As for the help pages, which contain all plan information, they are located at the very bottom of the home page in tiny font in the footer section.

### Recommendations:

To have more efficiency, they could improve the breakdown structure of information. On the homepage, they should keep the two boxes with headings as “Hulu” and “Hulu+LiveTV” and should list two monthly prices under each heading, one for with-ads and one for ad-free. That way, someone new can easily identify their options.

Additionally, they can include the help documentation link in the top left of the homepage so that new users don’t have to go to the bottom and dissect the tiny font to find the purchase plans.

## Familiarity:

### Issues:

One issue with the familiarity criteria is that new terms aren’t defined at every occurrence. For example, the readers may not completely understand the term “add-on.” The term is first introduced on the bottom of the homepage under the Hulu pricing plans, but it doesn’t mention any pricing associated with the add-ons. Readers may not know that add-ons cost additional money beyond $5.99 and $54.99 per month with the way it is casually mentioned as part of both subscription models. To see the prices of the add-on features, you have to navigate to the “Pricing and Plans” page in the footer where they mention add on prices for plans that include live TV and those that don’t.

### Recommendations:

To improve the familiarity of terms for the reader, they can add clarity to the term “add-on.” For the add-on features like HBO, Showtime, etc.., they can *add the pricing of the add-on*, so the user does not think that the add-ons are included in the Hulu purchase. The pricing models for Hulu and Hulu+LiveTV could contain links to the help pages in the footer, which contain all of the pricing models in addition to descriptions of the add-on features.

# Reflection on Evaluation Process:

Overall, this heuristic evaluation process was good in that I was able to refer to a set of generally agreed upon rules for proper documentation. I would not have thought of certain issues were it not for a predetermined set of criteria to compare it to. What was difficult is that it took me several attempts to see whether a specific criterion would encompass a certain issue in the documentation because the criteria was more generic. For example, I had to think to recognize that the criteria “Layered information and branching provide minimalist paths through information” could apply to several scenarios such as an absence of paragraph structures in favor of bullet lists or perhaps the usage of links to additional information to declutter the current page and allow quicker traversal. Another concern I had was I didn’t know how many criteria would qualify for a certain issue I noticed. I tried to note down the issue for the criteria I thought was most relevant. I would validate my results by consulting with other evaluators of this document and comparing the total scores we gave for each of the six cycles of the heuristic form.

**Hulu Homepage Link:** <https://www.hulu.com/welcome>

**Hulu Help Center Link:** <https://help.hulu.com/s/article/how-much-does-hulu-cost?language=en_US>