AnkiShare

AnkiShare Usability Testing Report

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Executive Summary

Usability testing was conducted to evaluate how intuitive and easy AnkiShare is to use. We were especially interested in how quickly yet accurately users could achieve their goals.

"It's like a Dropbox for Anki decks"
57% (4/7) of participants compared AnkiShare to Dropbox. As they are indeed identical conceptually, this suggests that students have an accurate understanding of AnkiShare's workflow and use.

- *Emphasize upload/download features, make comparisons to Dropbox in copy or styles.*

"The filter doesn't work"
71% (5/7) of participants didn't notice when the filter had been applied. They either assumed it was a technical error, or that there was no filtered content.

- *Replace auto-filtering with an action button, include visibility of filter status, re-size elements to emphasize content.*

Upload form hard to locate
43% (3/7) of participants were unable to navigate to the "Upload" page, either not being able to locate the "Upload Decks" link, or thinking the filter was the upload form.

- *Make user's location on the site more clear—include page headers and label the filter.*

Filter took longer than expected to apply
85% (6/7) of participants spent more than the expected 30 seconds to apply the specified filters. This was primarily attributed to participants scanning the entire course list, not noticing the "Year" categorizations.

- *Make categorization of courses more clear, remove irrelevant filter options.*

Research Methodology

Usability testing was conducted with 7 students from the U.C. Irvine School of Medicine. The product was evaluated based on the testers' ability to complete the following tasks, with errors, comments, and time taken considered.

1. Create Account
2. Sign in
3. Filter by “Professor” for “Jones”
4. Download the sample deck for Jones’ Pathology final
5. Upload a deck, including accurate completion of the upload form

Testing Environment

Testing was conducted at the U.C. Irvine School of Medicine in January 2015. Participants were asked to use their own laptops for the test—a mix between Windows/Mac OS/Linux operating systems and varying screen resolutions. Browsers used were either Google Chrome or Safari.

The tests were conducted on www.ankishare.com, AnkiShare version 3.0.

User Profiles

The seven participants were all students enrolled in the U.C. Irvine School of Medicine, ranging from Year 1 to Year 4 students. They possessed varying degrees of experience using AnkiShare, from zero to three months.

Top Findings & Recommendations

1. Mental Model

Participants were found to possess a simple and accurate mental model of the system

In their comments, four participants compared AnkiShare to a specialized Dropbox. As both products revolve around a collaborative upload/download system, users are able to easily understand and describe the system. This is especially important given that previous surveys showed word-of-mouth would be AnkiShare’s primary method of referral.

***Recommendations**: Maintain and further emphasize the Upload and Download functionality. This can be done by including the "Upload" and "Download" keywords in the copy, and even comparing AnkiShare to Dropbox on the landing page. Consider using distinct colors and button-styles to further differentiate these two features from other interface elements.*

2. Filter

Filter considered "unresponsive" or "broken"
Five of seven participants had trouble viewing the results after using the filter. There were multiple causes for this, all originating from two attributes of the filter.

> **1. Filter is applied automatically upon field input**
> The lack of an "Apply filter" action button led to students being unaware of the system's status—results being filtered. Without properly analyzing the list of results, students were unable to infer the effects of the filtering. In one case, the user applied filters that resulted in no content—they assumed the filter had not run.
>
> **2. Filter element creates a "false floor" for the page**
> Because the filter box ends near bottom of the user's screen, students did not realize content had been dynamically generated/ modified beneath the fold. This is exacerbated by the aforementioned issue, where the page does not refresh upon filtering—denying visibility of the system's status. Users did not scroll down to view the results, instead examining the filter to ensure they entered the fields correctly.

***Recommendations:** Let the user know when the filter is running, when it has finished running, and guide them to the results.*

- *Replace auto-filtering with an "Apply" button*
- *Implement a progress bar or similar animation*
- *Introduce copy that confirms the completion of the filtering, or an error message alerting the user of the lack of content*
- *Label the results list as being filtered, including what filters had been applied*

- *Adjust the height of the filter element based on the user's screen resolution, ensuring partial visibility of the results set*

Filter took almost twice the predicted 30 seconds to use
Participants were asked to select "Pathology" and "Jones" in the "Courses" and "Professor" fields, respectively. Six of seven participants spent more than 60 seconds to successfully select them.

Although the courses are listed under their corresponding student years, they did not realize this, and scanned the entire list. "Jones" was found more easily, as the professor list is alphabetized. As the primary method of content selection, the filter must be as efficient as possible.

***Recommendations*:** *Make the course list headers (Year 1, Year 2, etc) more distinct (bold, different color, etc). Consider only showing courses of the year associated with the student's AnkiShare account (further research needed).*

3. Uploading Decks

Upload form hard to locate
Despite uploading decks being half of AnkiShare's core functionality, three of seven participants were unable to navigate to the "Upload" interface via the "Upload Decks" button. These users incorrectly assumed the filter was the upload form, due to the similar input fields, such as "Professor" and "Course." They realized their mistake either when noticing the lack of a file-upload form, or upon noticing a filter being applied. None of the three noticed the "Upload Decks" button in the navigation bar without intervention—they had already scrolled down, hiding the site navigation header.

***Recommendations*:** *Help the user know where they are at all times—include "Download" in the header of the download page, and label the filter. Consider fixing the navigation bar to the top of the screen.*

"Is 'Author' the creator of the deck or the professor who wrote the material the deck is based on?"
Terminology used within the forms caused confusion among two of seven participants.

While it was assumed that it would be clear (given the order of the fields, "professor" being listed before "author"), these participants completed the form from the bottom up. "Year" was found to be ambiguous as well—they didn't know if it was referring to their student year or the day's date.

Recommendations: *Remove the "Author" field and automatically include the user's username. If students desire anonymity, consider an option to remain anonymous. Replace the "Year" text input field with a drop-down list of the four medical student years (MS1-MS4).*

Additional Findings

Deck information

Two of seven participants indicated the desire to know more about a deck before downloading it, citing "deck size" and "deck preview" features.

Length of notes

While it was assumed that the notes entered by users would be a few words, three of seven participants entered two or more sentences, which did not fit in the output.

"Type" of deck

Two of seven participants desired classification for decks. Using icons or keywords to represent different topics was an example that a participant gave.