

## Unit 3: Usability Testing and Report

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For Unit 3, we will build upon the audience awareness strategies that we developed the previous units and contextualize them within usability research and testing. This project will have you learn basic usability principles that are practiced within a variety of industries, practice research methods, investigate the goals and needs of stakeholders, and gain experience with writing research reports.

### Pre-Proposal Memo

Each of you individually will write a one page, single-spaced memo to me explaining 2-3 ideas you have for a potential website or application to conduct a usability study on and why. You may also list people you'd like to work with and why. I'll do my best to take these requests into account, but I'll largely be assigning groups based on similarities between project proposals. This memo will count the reading response for Week 5. Please submit your memo to Blackboard by **class on Wednesday, July 13**.

### Usability Research Report

Imagine that you work for Usability Inc., a consulting firm that specializes in evaluating web and application interfaces. You and your team have been contracted to do a quick usability study on an application or website to determine how well this interface responds to the needs of its users. Your deliverable will be a report written for the company or organization behind the application or website that will include descriptions of how you went about looking for design problems, what problems you saw, and what changes you recommend.

After your group selects the application or website you will be testing, you will analyze its usability using at least two research methods covered in class. For instance, your group could develop about two-three tasks for your participants to complete and for you and your group members to observe and analyze using think aloud protocols. Your group is also free to borrow and adapt Google's Usability Café questionnaire, which we'll go over in class. Your group should aim to have a minimum of five (5) users for your usability study. Each user should also sign the Informed Consent form that has been uploaded to the Course Assignments folder.

After you and your group complete the study, you'll write up your results in an IMRaD-style collaborative report. Aim for a 7-9 page, single-spaced report that can include the title page, reference page, etc. Page lengths are negotiable as long as the group communicates their rationale clearly and in advance to me.

Your collaborative research report should include the following sections:

1. **Title Page**
2. **Table of Contents and List of Figures (if applicable)**
3. **Executive Summary** in which you present a summary of your group's assessment of the application or system and some recommendations for improvement if needed.
4. **Introduction** in which you orient your readers to your task. Give a very brief overview on what the interface is and then explain the role (and objective(s)) of your product evaluation team.
5. **Methods** in which you describe how your research was conducted. Here, you can go into detail about the usability methods you used and their purpose. You can also describe your participants as well as the tasks you gave them. You can also discuss which kinds of major secondary sources your group used and why. You may also address the limitations of your research in this section.
6. **Results and Discussion** in which you present the findings of your usability study and discuss the interpretations of this information as they relate back to the goal(s) your group outlined in the

introduction. You can present these findings in order of priority and/or in relation to the task(s) you gave your participants. Identify common and important problems of the application or website. Try to generalize problems that are related, and use examples to highlight them. Include annotated screen shots where appropriate.

7. **Conclusion** in which you summarize your group's overall assessment of the application or website and offer important changes that you would make to the design of the system, with explanation.
8. **References** page in which you will list the sources of information you have used in your paper. Your group is free to select the style guide you feel most comfortable with as long as your citations are consistent.

### **Team Performance Review**

For credit, you will all individually submit a team performance review evaluation with your final draft. While everyone in the group will receive the same grade for the research report, persistent complaints about a single group member may be factored into individual grades.

### **Self-Assessment Memo**

This self-assessment memo will function exactly the same way as the previous one you wrote for the last two assignments. Your memo should demonstrate your ability to think about and discuss the relationship between the concepts from the class and this assignment. You can also discuss the evolution of your writing through this course. As you consider and write about this process, you can use the following questions to help guide your reflection:

- How does this project connect to the larger issues we've been discussing in class?
- How did you use in-class discussion or other materials/activities to inform your writing?
- What parts of the project did you enjoy? What parts were difficult for you?
- What did you learn in the writing of this project?
- What challenges did you experience when completing the course projects, and how did you approach these challenges? Did you gain anything from this process?
- Choose the assigned reading you thought was most useful to successfully completing a project or to your own learning. What was useful or interesting about it?
- Were you able to make any progress towards the writing goals you outlined in the introductory survey? If so, which ones? What progress are you seeing? How do you imagine yourself continuing to work on these goals?

Each individual should write up this reflection in a one-two page, single-spaced memo.

### **Requirements**

#### *Content*

- Include each of the major sections (Title page, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, Conclusion, and References page).
- Use at least two research methods to test and evaluate the usability of your group's selected application or website.
- Demonstrate an excellent understanding of audience, purpose, and context.

#### *Organization*

- Include clear, easily identifiable sections that are logically ordered and contain transitions to guide the reader through the text.

### *Style and Tone*

- Use clear, concise writing that is largely in the active voice and the stylistic choices are appropriate given the audience, purpose, and context
- Adopt a professional and respectful tone.

### *Format*

- Use effective layout and design techniques to make your report easy to follow
- Include a caption and in-text reference for any graphics.
- Adhere to page requirements (unless a new page range is negotiated).

### **Grading**

- This assignment is worth a total of 35% of your course grade.
- Grades will be based on meeting the above requirements and applying the lessons discussed in our course readings and in class.
- All group members will receive a baseline group grade. Individual grades may be adjusted as needed.

### **Due Dates**

**7/13:** The **pre-proposal memo** is due before class.

**7/15:** Your group should complete a **group contract/work plan** detailing your division of responsibilities, topic, and initial plan for implementation. You will have class time for this task that day.

**7/25:** Submit your group's **introduction and methods sections**. I will provide feedback on these partial drafts and expect revision once you are further into data analysis.

**8/1:** Please bring a digital copy of your **report draft** to class since we will be conducting a peer review session for this document.

**8/2-8/3:** Each group will deliver a **12-minute presentation** about your major findings and recommendations. We will discuss expectations for presentations in class.

**8/5:** Please have one group member submit **final draft of your report** and scanned copies of **the informed consent form** by 11:59 pm. Individually, you will submit your **team performance review** and **self-assessment memo** by this time.