

Instructions for Usability Test Observers

Thanks for coming to today's tests. Each of the three sessions will last about 25 minutes, with a five-minute break in between.

To get as much as we can out of these tests, we need your help with a few things:

- Take notes. Please make notes about anything interesting you notice, particularly points where the user was confused or couldn't get the tasks done. We'll be comparing notes during the debriefing session after the test today.
- Make a list at the end of each session. During the break between sessions, use the attached sheet to jot down the three most serious usability problems you noticed in that session.
- Come to the debriefing. If at all possible, we'd love to have you join us at 10:30am in the Dean's Conference Room where we'll compare notes and decide what usability problems we're going to fix in the next month.
- If you think of a question you'd like to ask the participant, write it down. Near the end of each session, we'll check to see if you have any questions.
- Stay as long as you can. We know you have other commitments, but there are only a few sessions, and each one will offer different lessons. Even if you start to lose interest, try to keep watching and listening—you never know when the participant will say something revealing. You can come and go if you need to, but please try to do it unobtrusively.
- Try to avoid distracting others. Following a test can require concentration. Try to limit your conversation to what you're observing. If you need to have another kind of discussion or answer a phone call, please step outside the room. Think of it as a movie theater: don't talk loud enough or long enough that the people around you can't follow the plot.

Thanks for your help!

Top three usability problems

After each test session, list the three most serious usability problems you noticed.

Participant #1

1...

2..

3..

Participant #2

1...

2..

3..

Participant #3

1...

2..

3..

1. You are writing a paper for a course in Computer Science. Find a newspaper article by Lawrence Lessig entitled "Spamsters know the laws will never be enforced".
2. You are writing a paper for an advanced course in History, but you are overwhelmed by the number of results when you search for books and articles about the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Get help with your Psychology research.
3. You are writing a paper for a course in Public Policy. Find an article by David Lewis called "Rethinking Sustainable Development: NGOs, Organizational Culture, and Institutional Sustainability."
4. You are writing a paper for a course in Psychology. Find an article entitled "Predicting Happiness among Centenarians" published in *Gerontology* in 2010.
5. It is the first week of your introduction to Engineering course, and the professor asks you to pick an Engineering topic to research for the rest of the semester. You know nothing about Engineering. Find some library resources on Engineering to help you pick a topic.

Appendix A: Usability Test Script

The following script is adapted from Krug, Steve. (2010). *Rocket Surgery Made Easy: The Do-It-Yourself Guide to Finding and Fixing Usability Problems*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders. pp. 147-152.

Hi, PARTICIPANT NAME. My name is FACILITATOR NAME, and I'm going to be walking you through this session today.

Before we begin, I have some information for you, and I'm going to read it to make sure that I cover everything.

We asked you here today to help us test the GVSU Libraries website to make sure that everything works as we intended. The session should take about 30 minutes.

The first thing I want to make clear is that we're testing the *website*, not you. You can't do anything wrong here. In fact, this is probably the one place today where you don't have to worry about making mistakes.

As you use the site, I'm going to ask you as much as possible to think out loud: to say what you're thinking. This will be a big help to us.

Also, please don't worry that you're going to hurt our feelings. We're doing this to improve the site for all of our users, so we need to hear your honest reactions.

If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away, since we're interested in how people do when they don't have someone sitting next to them to help. But if you still have questions when we're done, I'll try to answer them then. If you need to take a break at any point, just let me know.

With your permission, we're going to record what happens on the screen and our conversation. The recording will only be used to help us figure out how to improve the site, and it won't be seen by anyone except the people working on this project. And it helps me because I don't have to take as many notes.

Also, there are a few people from the University Libraries observing this session in another room. (They can't see us, just the screen.)

If you would, I'm going to ask you to sign a consent form for us. It says that we have your permission to record you and that the recording will only be seen by the people working on the project.

[Give Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) and a pen.]

Do you have any questions so far?

Before we look at the site, I'd like to ask you a few quick questions.

What is your University affiliation? What is your major/department?

Roughly how many hours a week would you say you spend using the Internet, including Web browsing and email, at work, at school, and at home?

And what's the split between email and browsing—just a rough percentage?

What kinds of sites do you use on the Web?

Do you see the Web as essential to your student/staff/faculty work here at GVSU?

Thank you, that's great. We're done with the questions, and we can start looking at things.

[Open GVSU Libraries homepage in Web browser]

Now I'm going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks. I'm going to read each one out loud and give you a printed copy.

I'm also going to ask you to do these tasks without using Search. We'll learn a lot more about how well the site works that way.

And again, as much as possible, it will help us if you can try to think out loud as you go along.

[Hand the participant a scenario, and read it aloud. Allow the participant to proceed until the task is complete or the participant becomes frustrated. Repeat for each task or until time runs out.]

Thanks, that was very helpful.

If you'll excuse me for a minute, I'd like to see if the people in the observation room have any follow-up questions they'd like me to ask you.

[Call observation room and ask the participant any questions on follow-up.]

Do you have any questions for me, now that we're done?