Usability Guide

Design Principles for Creating
Useful · Usable · Seamless · Desirable
User Experiences

1 Be user-centered
Put actual end-users first as you design.
Get to know your users by observing
them and listening to them. Remember:
you are *not* the target audience.

2 Design before you build
Reflect on your user research. Develop concept
prototypes that respect those findings in
terms of user behavior and workflow. Use
the prototype for usability testing and for
communicating with all stakeholders.

3 Build in accessibility
Can people with disabilities achieve their
objective? Consult Web Content Accessibility
Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 AA).

4 Ensure products are self-explanatory
Does the interface help or hinder the
users' ability to complete their task
quickly, efficiently, and even joyfully?
Simple is good. Clarity is important.

5 Minimize cognitive load
Does the interface match users' mental
model for how they would naturally perform
the work task? Are there steps that might
be eliminated or combined to increase the
efficiency of the interface?

6 Test early and often.
Test usability with the end-users throughout
the project. Make modifications. Test again.

Usability Methods

Interviews

Interview one user at a time. Gather context, motivation, learn about their workflow. Let your users do the talking.

Surveys

Gain feedback from broad user community on new or current technology or services.

Card Sorting

Place navigation menu items on index cards and let users sort and collect them into meaningful categories. The results of this exercise informs your information architecture, so your interface is more self-explanatory.

Journey Maps

Collaboratively draw the service experience from the users' perspective to reveal gaps.

Task Analysis

Observe users performing daily tasks in their own environment. Applying these observations to your design helps create intuitive interfaces.

Usability testing

Obtain early feedback on your design ideas with low or high fidelity prototypes. Observe and record end-user responses and actions as they interact with prototype.