

Usability Testing Encyclopedia Article

Usability Testing

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Usability Testing

Usability testing consists of a series of test methods used to measure a product's performance with respect to its audience. This testing allows the examiner to determine if the product satisfies the audience's needs, it also measures the product's ease of use.

This method of testing can be used to measure the performance of software **applications**, web applications, web pages, **hardware** or IT related instructions. The examiner or tester is usually called the designer, developer or software tester.

Although usability testing is used in different fields in the IT industry, it always requires the same preparation questions.

- What do you want the product to accomplish?
- What is the purpose of this testing?
- Who is the audience?
- Does this product fulfill the customer's needs? How usable is the product?
- What is the purpose of this testing? (What type of answers am I looking for?)

These questions must be answered to conduct a good usability test. Then, it becomes the tester's responsibility to determine which test method or methods will best answer these questions and then **design** the test. In the usability test process the tester must identify the audience, determine the test design, determine the criteria for testing the audience and determine the tasks that the test audience will perform. The tester must acquire all materials needed to set up the test, obtain a sample audience, and either assign a person to run the test or observers to conduct **data** gathering.

These test methods, also referred to as experiments, include prototype testing, thinking-out-loud protocol, questionnaires, observation testing, clustering and labeling exercises, and focus groups.