

Usability Heuristic checklists to ponder



Redundant content. Page may be deleted

All the content of this page can be found in "[References to Other Heuristics](#)". Some of the content is taken from draft versions which have been superseded by final versions. This page could be removed.

Top 10 Usability Heuristics (Jacob Nielsen, http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html)

Match between system and the real world

- The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms.
- Follow real-world conventions.
- Make information appear in a natural and logical order.

Recognition rather than recall

- Make objects, actions, and options visible.
- The user should not have to remember information from one part of the system to another.
- Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Visibility of system status

- The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Error messages should:

- Be expressed in plain language (no codes)
- Precisely indicate the problem
- Constructively suggest a solution

Error prevention

- Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place.

User control and freedom

- Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state quickly.
- Support undo and redo.

Flexibility and efficiency of use

- Accelerators—~~unseen by the novice user~~—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users.
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

Minimalist design

- Screens should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed.
- Every extra unit of information in a screen competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Consistency and standards

- Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.
- Follow platform conventions.

Help and documentation

It is better if the system can be used without documentation. If necessary, documentation should be:

- Easy to search
- Focused on the user's task
- List concrete steps to be carried out

- Not too large

Here is a detailed description from Denise Pierotta, Xerox, of specific things to look for when evaluating Nielsen's Heuristics: <http://www.stcsig.org/usability/topics/articles/he-checklist.html>.

WAI Site Heuristic Evaluation http://www.w3.org/WAI/EO/Drafts/UCD/current_eval.html

Taken from the W3C's WAI Site Heuristic Evaluation

Version: 2004.02.26

Note: This Web page is a working draft and should not be referenced or quoted under any circumstances.

This document includes an evaluation of the current WAI Web site. Comments and additions can be submitted to wai-site-comments@w3.org (a public archive of comments is also available).

Feature Group	Description	Source	Example (clip, URI)	Notes
Design	The visual design does not present the information on the site in a polished manner.	Michael Lenz		
Design	The visual design does little to help facilitate the users' interaction.	Michael Lenz		
Design	The site lacks visual appeal. It does however feel like one site based on its visual presentation.	Michael Lenz		
Design	In some cases subheads have more visual weight than their parents.	Michael Lenz		
Design	The visual design does present the information on the site in a trustworthy manner.	Michael Lenz		
Design	Credibility is not established through the visual design system of the site.	Michael Lenz		
Functionality	The site does not articulate it's purpose. The home page looks to be a collection of links. It assumes a base knowledge. The quote from Tim Berners-Lee does not tell the user anything about the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI).	Michael Lenz		
Functionality	The site does not use natural human language. It is dependent on a user having a base knowledge that should not be assumed.	Michael Lenz		
Functionality	There are some indications of possible goals of the site. Unfortunately the user is not given context around the content to enable them to determine what the intended goal of the content is	Michael Lenz		
Functionality	The 404 page does not recognize a local directory parent.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	The site is extremely dependent on the browser back button.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	The site does a very good job of labeling and page headings. Unfortunately the user is very frequently linked into the body area of a page via anchor links, which provide no overall context to the user.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	With so many in line links the pages can easily become overwhelming	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	It is quite easy when looking for new content to get in link loop.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	It is very hard to tell if you have changed a content area or driven deeper into the content you are in.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	The site does not label anchor links as such.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	Without an explicit hierarchy this makes the site hard to use at times.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	Links at times do not match the term used on the corresponding page.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	The site does not follow best practices pertaining to GUI.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	The site does not tell the user what content area they are in. It is very easy for a user to transverse sites areas without knowing it.	Michael Lenz		
Navigation	Generally the error prevention is out of date.	Michael Lenz		
Content	The site is narrowly focused on the expert user and their goals. It does little in the way of helping users that are looking for guidance.	Michael Lenz		
Content	Pages make use of very similar content and repeat similar concepts, confusing the user.	Michael Lenz		
Content	The pages do not group concepts into consumable chunks. They very frequently overload the user with information without giving context.	Michael Lenz		
Content	Flat content structure doesn't give relational context.	Michael Lenz		
Content	Content position appears to have no relation to its importance. Though with such a wide user base, it is hard to say if it is narrowly focused or unfocused.	Michael Lenz		
Content	The content does not allow the user to easily drill deeper. It is very easy for users to find links on a topic, but the site does not tell the user if they are driving deeper or shifting content areas.	Michael Lenz		
Content	On one end the pace is very fast and cryptic, on the other it is appropriate. The site needs to better modify its style based on its target audience. It appears to write the same (technical) no matter who the intended audience is.	Michael Lenz		

Content	After going through the site map, it appears to have plenty of information. Unfortunately the site does not facilitate the user who is new to the site. It also fails to accelerate the tasks of the expert users.	Michael Lenz		
Content	The site does not take into account the technical range of its audience. It relies heavily on a knowledge base that may not be present.	Michael Lenz		
Content	It speaks WAI language. It is very difficult to determine the differences in content and it does not use natural human language. This is magnified when a novice user visits the site.	Michael Lenz		
Content	This is one of the biggest failings of the site is that it does not explain unfamiliar concepts in way users will understand.	Michael Lenz		For example if a user goes to the User Agent page, it does not tell the user what a User Agent is. Rather it dives into User Agents and again users terms foreign to the general populous.
Content	The site does a good job at keeping the web site current. Though it would benefit the user to be able to see what areas of a site area have been updated recently.	Michael Lenz		

A Detailed, General Purpose Checklist (Brinck, Gergle and Wood 2001)

Architecture and Navigation

- Does the structure fit the purpose?
- Is the navigation scheme clear?
- Where are you?
- How do you find what you want?
- Is there a reasonable number of navbar choices?
- Do link names match page names?
- Are links clearly marked?
- Is there a clearly marked link back to the home page?
- Is there an option to search for information?
- Is there a site map?
- Does every page make it clear which web site you're in?
- Does the user have control over navigation?

Layout and Design

- Does page size exceed window size?
- Is layout consistent between pages?
- Is there a clear focal point on each page?
- Does the layout work visually?
- Is alignment used effectively?
- Is grouping used effectively?
- Is there good contrast?
- Is the layout cluttered?
- Is it aesthetically pleasing?

Content

- Is the text clear and concise?
- Is text organized in small chunks?
- Are there spelling or grammar errors?
- Do pages include introductory text?
- Do multimedia components support the task?

Forms and Interaction

- Do forms support the task?
- Do dialogues follow a logical progression?
- Is it clear where to go next?
- Are dialogue methods concise and consistent?
- Are form elements used properly?
- Are elements grouped properly?
- Are there clear Submit buttons?

Graphics

- Is image quality adequate?
- Do the images include alternate text?
- Do the images include size information?
- Do the images use a consistent light source?
- Are images stored for maximum compression?
- Is mouse-over feedback provided? Is it useful?
- Are animations useful? Are there too many? Are they properly compressed?

Color

- Is the choice of colors appropriate for the site?
- Are too many colors used?

- Are colors used consistently?
- Are graphics colors dithered?
- Do color choices work in grayscale?

Typography

- Is the text legible?
- Is the font size large enough?
- Is the font color appropriate and is there sufficient contrast?
- Is the text formatted for 10 - 12 words per line?
- Are there sufficient margins?
- Are typefaces used properly and consistently?

Error Tolerance

- Do users need to remember items across pages or sessions?
- Are confirmations provided before risky or costly actions?
- Are risky or costly actions reversible?
- Are entry errors caught locally?
- Do error pages provide useful information?
- Do search-error pages provide broadening tips?
- Is help available?
- Is help task-oriented?
- Is help contextual?

Platform and Implementation

- Is load-time fast enough? Does it load in 3 to 15 seconds?
- Do all the links work?
- Are there broken images?
- Are pages written to be found by search engines?
- Does the site work with the user's browser?
- Does the site work with the user's hardware platform?
- Does the site work on high and low resolution monitors?
- Are nonstandard plug-ins required? Are they necessary or useful?