

# User Experience Walkthroughs

## What is a UX Walkthrough?

A User Experience (UX) Walkthrough is a technique created and developed by the Fluid project to identify usability and accessibility issues in a website or application. It is a procedure for examining a user interface following a set protocol and making assessments based on predetermined criteria.

Fluid's UX Walkthrough technique is based on proven conventional inspection procedures. It is a synthesis of methods that enables the reviewer to make assessments both from the user's point of view and that of a design expert. The multi-faceted nature of the UX Walkthrough enables the reviewer to make assessments across several dimensions, including: general design quality, task-oriented usability, assistive technology usability, accessibility standards compliance, and code quality.

A UX Walkthrough can be performed by novices as well as experienced evaluators. The result is a comprehensive and multidimensional report of usability and accessibility issues.

## How to Do a UX Walkthrough

If you plan to do a user experience evaluation of a service or product, we suggest that you read this entire document to gain an understanding of the Fluid approach and learn about the different types of inspection techniques you will be using.

To perform your UX Walkthrough:

- Read the [UX Walkthrough Preparation and Execution](#) document and make preparations for your inspection.
- Review the [UX Walkthrough Protocols and Checklists](#) guide which contains a step by step recipe for a UX Walkthrough.
- Follow the steps in the guide to complete your UX Walkthrough.
- Capture the information from your sessions in a precise and consistent format. Examples of templates used by the Fluid project can be found on the [UX Walkthrough Report Template](#) page.

## UX Walkthroughs and Conventional Inspection Methods

The Fluid UX Walkthrough method draws upon several types of conventional inspection techniques, each with its own procedure and evaluation guidelines. By combining elements from proven techniques, a UX Walkthrough produces a result that reveals usability and accessibility issues effectively and efficiently. The techniques employed in a UX Walkthrough include heuristic evaluation, cognitive walkthrough, and code review.

To learn more about each of the methods listed, click on its heading.

### Heuristic Evaluation

In heuristic evaluation, design, usability, and accessibility experts engage in systematic inspections of the user interface with the goal of identifying usability and accessibility problems based on recognized principles called *heuristics*. Heuristic evaluation is used in a UX Walkthrough to determine if a user interface conforms to high level design principles.

### Cognitive Walkthrough

A cognitive walkthrough is a step-by-step exploration of a service to see how well a particular type of user (represented by a [persona](#)) is able to accomplish a set of objectives. It is performed by tracing the user actions and associated cues and feedback, for one or more particular tasks. This technique is used in a UX Walkthrough to see whether the service meets a user's need to understand how to accomplish a task and achieve a goal.

**Accessibility in a Cognitive Walkthrough:** A cognitive walkthrough may focus on accessibility issues. This may involve the use of assistive technologies and particular evaluation criteria relevant to those users. Accessibility is central to the Fluid Project's goals. It is recommended that accessibility assessment always be a part of a UX Walkthrough.

**Personas:** Ideally, a formal cognitive walkthrough employs a research-based persona to represent the user. It is, however, possible to conduct a cognitive walkthrough and get useful results without using personas. If you understand your users well enough to identify tasks and objectives for them, you can conduct a cognitive walkthrough. A UX Walkthrough may be done with formal personas, or simply with well-understood user profiles.

### Accessibility Markup Review

Another approach to assessing the usability and accessibility of a service is to examine the actual code it presents to the browser, either by reading the HTML, or running it through a software tool. The objective here is to determine if the code conforms to established conventions. Going through the code is a somewhat different process from traversing the user interface, but it should be included in a UX Walkthrough to assess compliance with standards as well as general usability and accessibility.

## The Fluid Approach

The Fluid approach to UX walkthroughs is a kind of combination of *heuristic evaluation* and *cognitive walkthrough*. Heuristic evaluation is done by examining the interface to a system as whole, and hence isn't specific to any particular user task. Cognitive walkthroughs are done by tracing the user actions, and associated cues and feedback, for one or more particular tasks, and as such, don't attempt to cover the entire interface for a nontrivial system. A cognitive walkthrough can pick up issues in working through a task that can be hard to detect when examining the interface as a whole, relating especially to the adequacy of cues and feedback in context.

Our aim for Fluid, **Designing Software that works - for everyone**, includes *accessibility* as well as *usability*. Rather than seeing the two as separate issues, we take a unified view that encompasses both within the spectrum of usability challenges.

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### Related Links

- [UX Walkthrough Preparation and Execution](#): Information on how to use the checklists and reporting template to do a UX Walkthrough.
- [UX Walkthrough Protocols and Checklists](#) : The recipe to use when doing your own Fluid UX walkthrough.
- [UX Walkthrough Report Template](#): The template used to record your walkthrough results, referencing any needed instructions.
- [Accessibility Review Protocols](#): Simple steps you can use to assess the accessibility of your website or web application.