

Activity

Timing: 1 to 2 hours

Level: Ages 15 and up

Testing for usability

Activity Overview

Good web usability is defined as: easy to use, quick to learn, and providing an overall satisfying experience. A well-designed, usable site aims to enhance the user experience by elevating a website's perceived efficiency, elegance, and clarity. Observing how users interact with a web site can be the difference between a good and a great web project. Use this activity to introduce the topic of usability testing and have students create a usability-test interview sheet for testers to fill out as they conduct usability tests.

Note: Portions of this activity align to the Adobe Certified Associate objectives. Within the instruction steps and technical guides, the specific learning objectives for the exam(s) are referenced with the following format: ^{1.1}

Activity Objectives

Research and communication skills

- Conducting usability analysis

Project Assets

None

Background preparation resources

[Technical and content information](#)

[ISTE NETS*S Standards for Students](#)

[Adobe Certified Associate objectives](#)

Activity Steps

1. Introduce the topic of usability testing by asking students about their perception of usability testing^{6.2, 5.2}
 - What is usability testing?
 - How would you conduct a usability test?
 - Why is it important to question site visitors?
 - Why is it important to watch visitors as they go through your site?
 - What types of things should you look for when you watch site visitors?
 - When watching site visitors, how will you know they are having trouble?
 - When watching site visitors, how will you know when they like what they see on your site?
2. Discuss various methods for collecting ongoing user feedback and site-evaluation information, such as forms, site reports, e-mail requesting feedback, surveys, and so on and how they can be used as an ongoing usability assessments.^{6.3}
3. Explain that usability observation looks for latent behavior, behavior of which the site visitor is unaware. Latent behavior is found in body language or facial expressions visitors are unable to verbalize. Some examples follow:
 - Site visitors might wave the pointer around the screen for a short while, looking for something, but might not document that the item was difficult to find.
 - Site visitors might sigh or frown because they are tired of waiting for an image to load after clicking a link. This behavior indicates that an image file is too large, but the visitor might not document this occurrence.
4. To prepare for usability testing, ask students to make a usability-test interview sheet for testers to fill out as they go through the site. You might want to send your students to the All Things Web site at www.pantos.org/atw/35317.html for interview worksheet ideas.
Note: They can also refer to the *Usability and accessibility* worksheet from the *Analyzing websites* activity.
5. For usability testing, pair students (individually or from within different teams) and ask one partner to test the other's web project, using the usability-test interview worksheet. The other partner should observe the tester and document the tester's actions, looking for latent behavior. After the first tester finishes, have partners switch roles and perform the usability test for the other student's site.^{6.2, 5.2}
Note: You can also have students find their own usability testers.
6. From the feedback and personal notes, ask students to propose written solutions and implement them. If they do not plan to implement a proposed solution, make sure they document why they choose not to do so.
7. Ask students to revise their projects based on the information from the usability tests.
8. Remind students that designing for usability is important they won't know if they have truly met their goals until they have seen users interact with their web project. Observing users can be the difference between a good and a great web project.

Assessment:

	0 – Does not meet expectations	3 – Meets expectations	5 – Exceeds expectations
Usability test	Absent or incomplete.	Students create user feedback forms and run usability tests. Students document observations of user subjects and gather reports for user feedback from the test. Design teams implement all feasible suggestions from user test.	Students create detailed user feedback forms and run usability tests with multiple testers. Students clearly document observations of user subjects and gather detailed reports for user feedback from the test. Design teams implement all suggestions from user test and provide clear articulation of the impact these changes had on the overall site.

Background preparation resources:

- To view video tutorials aligned with the skills required to complete this project, visit Adobe TV: <http://tv.adobe.com>
- For more teaching and learning resources on the topics in this project, search for resources from the community on the Adobe Education Exchange: <http://edex.adobe.com/>

Testing a website:

- Web usability checklist: <http://drdobbs.com/184412660>
- Client survey: <http://edex.adobe.com/resource/231483/>

ISTE NETS*S Standards for Students

This project is aligned to the ISTE NETS*S Technology Standards. Depending on the subject and content area the student selects you may research your own state content standards to see how this project aligns to your state requirements.

ISTE NETS*S: Curriculum and Content Area Standards – NETS for Students

6. Technology Operations and Concepts
Students demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems and operations. Students:
 - a. understand and use technology systems.
 - b. select and use applications effectively and productively.
 - c. troubleshoot systems and applications.

Adobe Certified Associate Exam Objectives

Adobe Certified Associate, Web Authoring objectives

6.2 Identify techniques for basic usability tests.

6.3 Identify methods for collecting site feedback.

Adobe Certified Associate, Interactive Media objectives

5.2 Identify techniques for basic usability tests.

For more information

Find more teaching materials for using Adobe software in your classroom on the Adobe Education Exchange: <http://edex.adobe.com/>.



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